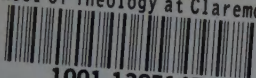


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Men of the Kingdom

# Athanasius: The Hero

*By*

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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To My Mother





## PREFATORY NOTE

THE days when men could be ruled by formal and lifeless dogma have passed. The days when all dogma is looked upon with suspicion are passing. We are beginning to learn that there is no particular merit in being uncertain about nearly everything fundamental in theology, and in repudiating all well-defined boundaries. The days of a living dogma, thrilling with creative energy, and claiming no authority but its own vitality, are approaching. Because to Athanasius, theology was not a mechanism but a vitality; because he understood that such doctrines as the Deity of our Lord are an essential part of Christianity, and must be preserved at whatever cost; and because there are no truths more important than these to our own eager, much seeking age; it has been a joy to write this little book about him.

In sending it forth, I wish to express my obligations to my friend the Rev. Samuel G. Ayres,

Librarian of the Drew Theological Seminary, for courtesies extended to me during my investigations of the subject.

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH.

*Kings Park, New York.*

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# Athanasius: The Hero.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE TIMES OF ATHANASIUS.

It is not easy to become a citizen of the past. To-day claims us. We are a part of its life. Our thoughts, our feelings, our way of looking at things, belong to the present. We but dimly realize that all down the far reaches of the slowly moving years, multitudes of other men and women have been living; numberless brains have been surging with activity and numberless hearts have throbbed with joy or woe. When we stop to think of it, we find it all too vast and overpowering, and shrink back into the present, with perhaps little desire to touch the icy hand of the past.

Yet we need this contact with times and men long vanished. We need it for what it has to teach us of how men met life in days that are half for-

gotten. They did not live in vain. They have much to say to us.

History is a treasure house of knowledge and wisdom. The present has its roots in the past, and a man who only knows the life of to-day can never fully understand it. Every thinker, if his thinking is to have worth and validity, needs to begin by getting to know the past.

The Christian Church has had a wonderful history. The story of its life is full of interest, of instruction, of warning, and of inspiration. Yet how little the average Christian knows about it. The life of the Church would be richer and more effective, if we companioned more with the past.

One of the periods of unique significance in the history of the Church was the time of the conflict with those who denied the deity of our Lord. From this conflict one personality towers impressively, the bishop, the story of whose life is to be told in these pages. If we can get back into the heat of this ancient struggle, if we can succeed in getting into living touch with the man who was its greatest hero, if we can feel the pulsing currents of the distant life when the battle was fought, and the real significance of it all, our lives will be stronger and finer for the experience.

In this chapter we shall attempt to place before our minds the facts which will enable us to understand the history and the theology of the period when Athanasius lived.

A generation before the birth of Christ, the republic of Rome became the Roman Empire, with Augustus Cæsar in supreme power. The change was at first less a change in form than in reality. Old names and institutions were preserved, but in fact the republic had ceased to be. The story of the Roman Empire with its far-flung battle line, its genius for colonial government, its practical control of the civilized world in spite of corruption and moral decay, forms part of the background of any true picture of the life of the fourth century A. D. The most potent name in the history of centuries had been the name of Rome. Everywhere the Roman governor and the Roman soldiery had given evidence of the power of the Imperial City on the Tiber. Sometimes all was violence and unrest in the capital itself. Emperors who were demons rather than men sat on the throne. In spite of them the empire remained massive and full of strength. Sometimes emperors of character, and genius for administration held the reins of government and under them the power and prestige of Rome in-

creased. One of the marvels of history is this story of a great empire welded together of people of all varieties of race, climate, language, and civilization. Rome was the great political master of the world.

From this situation, lasting through centuries, certain results had come. There was a new unity to the life of the world. Roman law had given a new stability to all institutions. Roman control had made travel safe as it had never been. The great roads built under the supervision of Rome, typified the new manner of life for the world. Commerce had protection. The world became smaller. Men of different nations were inevitably drawn together. They were shaken out of their provincialism.

This new unity had another cause besides the government of Rome.

Where the power of Rome went, Greek culture followed. The Greek language was as cosmopolitan as the Roman power. If Rome was the political governor of the world, Greece was its intellectual ruler. These were very old facts in the fourth century. The rule of Rome seemed as solidly based as the eternal hills. To dispute it was to court ruin. And the pre-eminence of Greek culture was unquestioned.



Near the close of the third century Diocletian became the Roman emperor. He instituted important political changes, dividing the empire with Maximian, one of his generals. Diocletian held his court at Nicomedia and Maximian's residence was at Milan. Each of these had a subordinate, who was to be his successor. Thus the empire had four heads instead of one, but with Diocletian in really supreme authority still. The German tribes were causing much anxiety and the empire needed to be in vigorous hands. After a number of years in power, Diocletian and Maximian transferred their authority to their subordinates. Diocletian from being an emperor turned to be a gardener and much delight he professed to find in his garden. With the retirement of Diocletian and Maximian, Galerius and Constantius came into supreme authority. After a year Constantius died, and the soldiers ignoring the plans of Diocletian for the succession, declared Constantine emperor. Five rivals had to be crushed before Constantine was in supreme power, and it took him eighteen years to do it. The year 324 A. D. found him the sole ruler of the empire. During his reign Christianity became practically the State religion. But of Christianity we shall speak in a later section of this chapter.

Constantine made Byzantium on the Bosphorus the capital of the empire. In honor of him its name was changed to Constantinople. The city of supreme importance practically was no longer on the Tiber. The Roman emperor had deserted Rome.

After a reign of thirty-one years, Constantine died, leaving the empire to be divided between his three sons, Constans, Constantine, and Constantius.

The three sons of Constantine made their own division of the empire. They decided that Constantine II should take the Gauls and Africa, Constantius the East, and Constans Italy and Illyricum.

In 340 A. D. Constantine II was killed while invading his brother Constans's territory, and Constans was murdered in 350 A. D. Constantius then had to fight for the empire. He was successful and reigned as its one ruler for about eight years. Upon his death there was a sudden change in the affairs of the world. Julian, who had gone back to paganism, came into power, and his brief reign was an endeavor to reinstate heathenism. He was killed while fighting the Persians in 363 A. D.

Another quick reversion—this time to Christianity—characterized the reign of Jovian. (A. D. 363-4.)

Valentinian, another soldier, became emperor upon the death of Jovian. He took charge of the western provinces and assigned the eastern to his brother Valens. The reign of Valentinian and Valens reaches beyond the limits of Athanasius's life. And with their names our outline of its political history may come to a close. The movements of the German tribes were becoming more and more ominous during these last years.

It has been impossible for us to refer even in a summary way to the history of the period without mentioning Christianity—the most vital fact of all.

Now we must look at the rise of Christianity and its situation in the fourth century more closely.

In the reign of Augustus, in a small country far from the capital, Jesus Christ was born. The beginnings of the new religion were humble in the extreme. At the time of the death of Christ, His name was scarcely known outside of Palestine. The leaders of His own people had rejected Him, and their hostility had led to His death. A few humble men—fishermen and others—were His followers. The outlook did not seem to indicate that Christianity would be more than a small Jewish sect,—too insignificant to secure even passing notice in the life of the great empire.

But soon the new faith began to show extraordinary power of propagation. From the start it encountered Jewish hostility, which soon became persecution. The Christians who fled from Jewish persecutions, however, became the disseminators of the faith. In Palestine, in Asia Minor, and then on along the shores of the Mediterranean the new religion made its way. The Jews followed with hatred and hostility, but Christianity kept on winning victory after victory. When large masses of people became Christians, the worship at particular heathen temples began to suffer. Now as at these centers of idolatry, many people depended for their livelihood on the prosperity of the temples, and the gathering of eager multitudes for worship, Christianity encountered a new difficulty. With the best intentions in the world it began to interfere with men's prosperity. This roused hatred and opposition. It was the prelude to the great three-century battle when Christianity would meet in conflict the forces of the Roman Empire.

While Nero was yet on the throne, occurred the burning of Rome. The emperor himself was suspected of having caused it. To divert suspicion from himself, he looked about for some set of people to accuse.

His eye fell upon the Christians, who had established themselves in Rome. They suited his purpose, and he branded them as incendiaries. It seems strange enough now to think that some things about the Christians would seem to give color to the emperor's accusation, innocent as they were. They did not reverence the Roman Empire. They believed it would come to an end, and that quickly. Their hope was the downfall of Rome, the end of the world, and the coming of Christ. So they were branded as haters of the human race, as the inhuman wretches who set on fire the Imperial City, and a terrible persecution began. Then came cruel orgies of barbarity, when Christians were sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and devoured by ferocious dogs which were set upon them, or covered with pitch, were made at night the living torches for Nero's garden. This local Roman persecution was the beginning of the long period of trial.

We are not to think of the three centuries of opposition to Christianity as times of incessant persecution. There were long periods of quiet. And often the Christians were unmolested in one place while they were meeting trials of awful severity in another.

It may seem strange to us that except as the re-

sult of a false accusation like that of Nero, the Christians should have met the power of the empire set against them in persecution. For Rome was the home of a multitude of faiths. Why should all other men be unmolested and the Christians persecuted? The answer is that the Roman authority allowed you to worship any deity you chose, provided you *also acknowledged the national religion*. But this was just what the Christian could not do. Not much comfort he could find in being told that he might worship Christ if he would only first worship the emperor. With him, if he was loyal to his Master, there could be no division of worship. To God alone and Christ as God might he pray. The seeming liberality of the Roman offered no acceptable terms to him. To accept what Rome offered, to do what Rome demanded, meant to be false to Christ.

Sometimes, as under Trajan, the persecution had its side of clemency.

It was Trajan who declared that the officers should not proceed against Christians, except on the ground of specific accusation. Still to be a Christian was to be legally subject to persecution, even when the matter was not actually pressed. The follower of Christ never knew when some enemy

might accuse him, and the alternative would be to worship heathen gods or pay the penalty of his loyalty to his Master.

Sometimes, as under Marcus Aurelius, a pestilence was declared to indicate the wrath of the gods because of the forsaking of their shrines, and Christians suffered because of the superstition. It was in the reign of Marcus Aurelius that Polycarp went to his martyrdom. We do well to remember the words of the old man when urged to give up his faith, "Eighty-six years," he said, "I have served Christ, and He has done me no harm; how could I now blaspheme my King who has redeemed me?"

With the reign of Decius commenced the last period of relentless and brutal persecution. Despite all efforts to overthrow it, Christianity had grown. It seemed to possess an inner quality of vitality and strength which made it impossible to crush it. All ranks and classes of society had been permeated by it. The time had come when it was necessary to take strong and remorseless measures if it was to be wiped out. Officers were ordered to proceed against Christians without waiting for specific accusations. Then a cruelly ingenious plan was devised. The persecution was directed especially against the leaders and men of high rank among the

Christians. Once get these out of the way, and the headless mass of Christians would soon give up their religion. This was the belief of those who made the plan.

When the heat of this persecution subsided Christianity still lived and a time of rest for the Church followed. This was the prelude to the terrible persecution beginning under Diocletian. Edict after edict, each more cruel than the others, came forth. Every Bible was to be burned, the churches were to be devastated, and the Christians were to be deprived of civil rights. On pain of death, all Christians were to sacrifice to the gods. When Diocletian abdicated, his successor in the East, Galerius, held a perfect carnival of persecution. Then it has been said, "Christians suffered everything which ruthless tyrants could inflict."

But this last awful darkness was the darkness just before the dawn.

To even Galerius it became evident that he was fighting a losing battle, and on his deathbed he issued an edict of toleration. It was not long until the last blood had been spilled, and the days of cruel and wholesale persecution by the Roman Empire were over. No one knows how many went to martyrs' graves in these centuries of dire trial. But



the world over, Christ had His confessors. Many had recanted. But in every country the faith had its heroes who were loyal unto death. The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the Church. They were fighting the battle of all future centuries. It was they who kept Christianity alive.

Constantine came to the throne under the very shadow of the last persecution. His father had been tolerant, and his son inherited this quality from his father. But under his rule there was more than toleration—Christianity became the State religion. He professed to have seen a vision before a battle with Maxentius—in which the cross appeared with the inscription “In hoc signo vince”—“By this sign conquer.” Constantine made the cross his standard, and the Roman soldiers marched under it. The hated sign, of the death of the Galilean peasant, was thus emblazoned on the banner of the emperor who became sole ruler of all the empire.

It must have been a time of sacred joy to multitudes of Christians. No wonder they thought highly of Constantine and were eager to speak of him in eulogy. Now, we may be more discriminating in our praise of him, but we, too, must regard this time as one of unique triumph for the Christian faith.

Alas! that the Church at peace with the empire should be found in bitter intellectual internal war. Alas! that success and power meant the secularization of much of the Church's life. However, these things belong to the story of Athanasius. We have said enough to make clear what a great history lay behind him in the Christian Church. But Christians had been doing more than living and being persecuted in these three centuries. They had been thinking, too, and we must now turn our attention to what had been going on in Christian thought, before the time of Athanasius.

We make a mistake if we think of the Apostolic Church as one come to full self-consciousness and possessed of a completely thought-out and fully articulated theology. This was to be the work of ages of Christian thinking. The faith of many, probably most of the early Christians was of a naïve character, quite apart from philosophical reflection. The present and perfect salvation in Christ filled the thought of men, and they lived in its light with not a great deal of reflection on the theology involved in this salvation. In Paul we have a really theological temperament, and in his writings a nearer approach to the work of a systematic Christian thinker than elsewhere in the New Testament.

But speaking broadly, we may say that the New Testament contains the materials for a worked out theology, rather than the theology itself.

Having minds imposes certain results upon men, however. They must reflect; they must justify their opinions at the bar of their own mental life. They must systematize these thoughts and finally build up world views which they endeavor to make unified and consistent. This is as true of Christian minds as of any other minds. To have Christian men meant ultimately and of necessity to have a Christian theology.

Other causes pressed Christians toward reflecting upon and adequately stating their faith. The second century, a period of expansion and constantly increasing influence for Christianity, was also an exceedingly literary age. So it came about that the faith not only met persecution but also literary attack. With great brilliancy and resourcefulness, pagan thinkers leveled their artillery against the advancing columns of the new religion. The work of Celsus is an example of this powerful attack. The Church had to meet it. Christianity could not remain quiet under false accusations, misrepresentation, and all the swift arrows of skillful

and hostile argument. So arose the Christian Apologists.

And right bravely they entered the lists to do battle for their faith. Calumnies met reply. The Gospel was defended with ardor and with genuine skill. Themselves returning the attack, the apologists held heathenism up to scorn, and showed by arguments whose weight could not be successfully denied that the heathen thinker lived in a structure ready to fall. The onslaughts of clear and vigorous thinking left heathenism very shabby and quite defenseless. These apologists were not modern theologians. They made mistakes. Their arguments would not always recommend themselves in a present-day theology. But they did their work. They defended the faith, and they gave utterance to some great arguments of permanent value.

Another and more difficult problem roused Christian thinkers. The faith was attacked not only from without but also from within. The age was one of syncretism—of the combining of faiths, and the attempt was made to preserve much that was heathen in the Church. The Gnostics were the most subtle and dangerous foes Christian thinkers had to meet during the second century.

Gnosticism was an aristocracy within the

Church. It professed to speak to the spiritually élite who could understand its mysteries. In forms so varied that it is difficult to speak in generalizations about it, this method of interpreting Christianity tried to take possession of the Church. God was infinitely removed—and intermediaries were put between Him and creation. Complete mythologies were imported wholesale into Christianity. Armed with the Gnostic view of the faith, the Christian might defend himself for becoming either a morbid ascetic or a licentious libertine. Sound Christian consciousness condemned the whole movement, and literary defenders rose up to express this condemnation in vigorous and effective form. The whole complex of Gnostic systems passed away at length like a dark storm cloud.

During this period the need of standards upon which to rely was keenly felt. And so the New Testament canon came to its permanent form. The Gnostics were, however, wonderfully fertile at ingenious misinterpretation. So not only the New Testament canon, but the interpretation of it, coming down from the earliest times, came to be recognized. Thus emerged the rule of faith. The preservation of the earliest interpretation was felt to be most sure in the most ancient sees with ■ regular

succession of bishops. So the belief in the importance of certain sees and in apostolic succession began to arise. There was good and the possibility of evil in these standards. On the latter side two of them helped to prepare the way for the pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church. These pretensions were doubtless far enough from the minds of the defenders of the faith, who used these standards against the Gnostics in the days of their battle.<sup>1</sup>

In the third century the Church grappled with the problem of the Trinity. The statements of early thinkers had often been loose and inadequate, more because the problem had not yet been thought out, than from any real tendency to heresy.

In the third century these partly articulate views came to a clearer issue. And the false positions the Church was called upon to repudiate, may be summed up under the term monarchianism—which has been defined as the tendency which emphasizes the unity of God, and rejects the personal Trinity. The most completely worked out system of this variety was Sabellianism. Here was offered a modal, instead of an actual Trinity. There was one God. He had revealed Himself first as Father, then as Son, and then as Holy Ghost. But the Trinity

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor James Orr, *Progress of Dogma*, Lecture II.

was one of manifestation, one in history. It did not belong to the Godhead itself. There were not three persons in the Godhead, there was one person who revealed Himself in three aspects. This system, as all the other forms of monarchianism, was open to insuperable objections. And the sound consciousness of the Church rejected it. Only in the belief in three fundamental eternal distinctions in the Godhead could Christian thinkers who carried their life with them in their thought find rest. This battle represented another step forward. The Church was moving into a clearer self-consciousness.

The next conflict was to deal with Jesus Christ Himself. He was the center of the faith and men must settle how they were to think of Him.

This was the battle regarding the deity of our Lord, and this brings us to the period of Athanasius.

In the above consideration of the early intellectual conflicts of the faith, we have spoken of principles rather than men. Let us now remind ourselves of a few of the great names which come before the time of Athanasius in the intellectual history of the Church. Probably the five most important names after the age of the apostles and before the fourth century are: Justin Martyr, Ire-

næus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Justin Martyr was born in Samaria. He was a philosopher, a Christian apologist, and met a martyr's death during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Irenæus was a native of Asia Minor and a Christian bishop. He wrote "Against the Heresies." He died about 202 A. D. Tertullian was born about 160 A. D. He wrote in Latin. He represents the tendency to repudiate philosophy. He did important apologetical work. The legal attitude so characteristic of the Latin mind was his. Clement and Origen both belonged to the great school at Alexandria. They represent the attitude of the Greek theology, with its openness to all the best in philosophy. Origen made the first formal attempt at a systematic theology.

The two schools of theology—the older at Alexandria and the younger at Antioch—deserve a word of special mention. The Alexandrian was speculative, open to truth everywhere, and inclined to allegory. The Antiochan was more critical and coldly rational. The allegorical tendency of the Alexandrians and the rationalistic tendency of the Antiochans needed checking, for the sake of the best results. The Alexandrian school, however, repre-



sented the most vital theological thinking of the time, and gave forth much of permanent value.

We must never lose the sense of the immanence of God, of openness to all truth, of the significance of the incarnation, and of the freedom of man, which belonged to the Alexandrian school.

Enough has been said to give the reader the necessary historical and theological background of the life of Athanasius. The world was still held fast in the power of the Roman Empire. The Church had three centuries of history behind it, and it was just emerging in triumph from long persecution. It had waged literary battle with paganism and within itself had fought and conquered Gnosticism and monarchianism. The Church was about to become a great political as well as a spiritual power, and was ready to face new issues.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CITY OF ATHANASIUS.

THE city of Alexandria was more than six hundred years old when Athanasius was born. The world conquerer, Alexander, had founded the city, and had given it his own name. Tradition says that the site was suggested to him by a dream, in which an old man appeared, and quoted some lines from Homer, which directed his attention to the place. It is more probable, if less poetic, that his keen eye saw the strategic possibilities of the position, as a future mart for the nations, and that he seized upon it for this reason. Another tradition has it, that when the city was laid out part of its boundaries were marked with flour, which birds came and devoured. At first Alexander was inclined to regard this as a bad omen, but he was led to see in it a symbol of the city's future commercial prosperity.

Alexandria was situated on the Mediterranean, with Lake Mareotis to the south. This lake connected with the Nile, and made the city a natural outlet for trade up the river. The city was opposite

to the island Pharos, with its great marble lighthouse—one of the wonders of the ancient world. In the original plan the city was in form like a Macedonian cloak. The two principal streets crossed each other at right angles. There was in the city an Egyptian quarter, a Greek quarter, and a Jewish quarter. The three elements, Egyptian, Jewish, and Greek, formed its essential features as to population.

Under the Ptolemies the city became one of great grandeur, and a center of literary and commercial activity. Its zenith of greatness had been reached when Rome began to take a part in its affairs, in the time of Cleopatra, nearly half a century before the birth of Christ. From this time began its decline. Under Roman control it had a checkered history. The terrible massacre under Caracalla was but one of the occasions when the iron heel of Rome trod heavily upon it. Even in the empire, however, the power of the city had been felt. Vespasian had been proclaimed emperor by the Alexandrians. And wise statesmen felt that Alexandria must be considered and reckoned with in their plans. This was true even in the time of Constantine, when Constantinople became its rival, and more of its prestige was lost.

Thus we see that when Athanasius lived, it was still a great and powerful city, even if a city in slow decay.

Its past was ready to speak very eloquently to an impressionable mind. Into its warehouses had been brought the treasures of the nations. It had become the exchange center between the East and the West. Ships bearing rich cargoes came into it from every clime. Wealth had thus poured into its coffers. And the city had been made very beautiful. In the fourth century much of this beauty became only a memory, but its palaces, its temples, and its halls of learning had previously made themselves the admiration of the world.

Then Alexandria was a great intellectual center. It had come to stand for the best of Greek culture. Here philosophers, poets, and artists lived and flourished. As the East and West met commercially, so they met intellectually at Alexandria. Its enormous library was a vast warehouse of intellectual treasures. As a center of learning it became pre-eminent. The ambitious youth who desired to master the best of the culture of the past, could not do better than to go to the city, the light of whose learning shone out like the light of its own Pharos, full of brightness and illumination.

Here it was that Judaism made its great effort

to become cosmopolitan. The Old Testament was first translated into Greek in Alexandria, and the resulting version—the Septuagint—won its way to such popularity that it seems to have been the form in which the ordinary Palestinian Jews read the Old Testament in the time of Christ. In Philo of Alexandria the attempt was made to harmonize Judaism and Greek philosophy. This movement to Hellenize Judaism was the outcome of the very intellectual mood of Alexandria.

Then the city had become a center of Christian learning. It was the home of Origen, and of Clement. Here Christianity, too, showed itself hospitable to Greek learning. The spirit of eclecticism was in the very air. The Greek theology is by no means complete. Its conclusions were not always wise. But, notwithstanding this, its work was extremely valuable. The Church has lessons to learn from it even yet. And Alexandria was the center of the Greek theology.

The Christian Church had felt the heavy hand of persecution in the Egyptian metropolis, and had there won its way through suffering. It had a heritage of Christian living, as well as of Christian thinking.

The people of Alexandria have been called the

Parisians of the ancient world. An eager, alert, excitable people they were. The mobs of Alexandria were easily stirred, and very violent. The city was often rent by its own passions. At one time we are told that different sections warred with each other for twelve years.

Such was the home of Athanasius. If any city in the world deserved at that time to be called cosmopolitan, surely it was Alexandria. What a wealth of influences poured upon the life of every man within its pale. To live here was to meet the world. Life was full of movement and stir. The eye, the mind, the sense of beauty, the love of commerce, the passion for pleasure,—all were appealed to.

New days and new influences were now to come. In the fourth century Alexandria was to have one supremely great character. The city which Alexander had founded, and where he had been buried; the city of the Ptolemies, with their commerce and their patronage of the arts and letters; the city of the voluptuous Cleopatra; the city of a heathen worship, with a temple unsurpassed in the world; the city of a vigorous and noble Christian theology, represented by Origen and Clement; was now to become the city of one most powerful and impressive character,—the Christian bishop Athanasius.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EARLY LIFE OF ATHANASIUS.

WE have no authentic record of the birth of Athanasius. The general opinion, however, is that he was born somewhere between 296 and 298 A. D. The reasons may be briefly summarized. He could not have been born earlier, for he had no recollection of the persecution occurring in 303, and he seemed so young at the time when he was made bishop (328 A. D.) that his enemies claimed that he was under the canonical age of thirty. He could not have been born later, for he was taught in theology by some who became martyrs in 311 A. D. Then before the outbreak of the Arian controversy in 319 he had written two works which show theological acumen and maturity. It is pleasant to believe that he was born in Alexandria, the city so profoundly associated with his name. During his lifetime we know that Alexandria was spoken of as his "native home."

Of his family we know practically nothing, though according to writers later than his own

time, they were of high rank and wealthy. His own means appear to have been small, from a statement made by himself.

Athanasius was a Greek in attitude and training, if not by blood, and there seems no good reason to doubt that he belonged to the Greek race also.

We are to think of him then as passing his childhood in days when the dark shadow of persecution fell across the pathway of the Church, his young blood stirred by stories of heroism and martyrdom, and the very sights and sounds of terrible persecution. To be taught by men who gave their lives for Christ would profoundly impress any sensitive nature, and there is no doubt that these early years wrote their lesson deeply upon the life of Athanasius.

There is some evidence pointing to a personal connection between the youth and the great monk, Antony. Though not at all certain this would fit in with the great sympathy Athanasius always felt for Asceticism.

Antony was a man of unusual personal attractiveness, as well as sanctity, and would leave his mark upon the lad who served him. And there would be singular impressiveness in the solitudes and sacred silences of the desert life of the hermit



to a boy accustomed to the city, with its glare, noise, and vice.

One story, of somewhat doubtful authenticity, has come to us regarding the boyhood of Athanasius. It is said that one day Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, was expecting some of the clergy to take dinner with him in a house overlooking the sea. Looking out of his window, he became interested in some boys playing on the shore. He saw that they were imitating some of the rites of the Church. Thinking at last that they were carrying their imitation of Churchly ordinances too far, he sent some of the clergy to bring them to him. Upon being questioned, the boys were at first frightened and denied everything. Then they were led to confess that one of them had taken the part of bishop and had baptized others who took the part of catechumens. Bishop Alexander found that all had been done in regular order, and was so much impressed that it was decided the baptisms should stand as valid, and that the parents of the boy bishop and his clergy should be instructed to have them trained for the Church's service. The boy bishop was Athanasius, and after preliminary study, he entered the service of Bishop Alexander himself.

This quaint old story, while perhaps not to be

taken at face value, at least suggests that Athanasius early manifested precocity in the things of God and the Church. And this one may readily believe. The boy on the seashore baptizing other boys, is a picturesque prefigurement of the great Christian bishop of later years.

As to the intellectual training of Athanasius, though he speaks slightly of his own attainments, it is evident that he was a man of real and generous culture. He is ready to quote Greek literature, he is at home in the movements of Greek philosophy. He is said to have attended classes in grammar and rhetoric, and it has even been stated that he studied law. But whatever the interest of Athanasius in the learning of his time, his devotion was the Bible. This book was his great university. One finds the peculiar Christian mood in the whole relation of Athanasius to the Bible. Here was his wisdom, and here his great teacher.

Theologically, he was thoroughly trained, and later years proved how consummately he could wield the sword in theological controversy. But he did not delight in mere polemics. He did not want to fight merely for the sake of fighting. It was the truth, as it is in Christ, that he loved; and for it he thought with all the power of a mental

equipment of unusual strength; and for it he fought with all the chivalrous heroism of a knight in armor.

After some preliminary training, Athanasius was received into the house of the bishop Alexander, and as a member of his household unique opportunities came to him. Alexander as the second bishop in Christendom, with widely wielded power and influence, was the center of many currents in the throbbing life of the Eastern Church. Already Athanasius may have received a preliminary bent from the teaching of Peter, previously bishop of Alexandria, regarding Him who being "by nature God, became by nature man." His theology was becoming Christo-centric, and in the midst of the complex life of the city and the interests and excitements of an ecclesiastic center, Athanasius kept this deep sense of Christ, and his place in thought and life. How easy it would have been for him to have degenerated into a mere ecclesiastic! What a perilous position to a young man to be the favorite of the second greatest bishop in the Church! How easy, if he had lacked moral robustness, and loyalty to the deep meaning of his inner life, for him to have gone through a process of moral and spiritual degeneration. No one has told the story of the subtle temptations which came to him during those

testing years. No one has written of his struggles. But we may be sure of both the temptations and struggles. And we may be sure that he emerged from them with new depth and reality to his life as a Christian and as a man.

So when we find Athanasius ordained deacon and made chief of the deacons of Alexandria, we are to think of his promotion, not as the result of clever machinations on the part of an ambitious young ecclesiastic, but the deserved reward of faithful service, and the recognition of unusual ability.

As a very young man, Athanasius essayed authorship, and he did his work with rare skill. His work "Against the Heathen," and the sequel, "On the Incarnation," can not be placed later than 318 A. D.

Athanasius was between twenty and twenty-three years of age at this time. Think of writing a theological masterpiece at twenty-three!

It is difficult for us to get the point of view of a man who is fighting heathenism, intrenched in the very life of society. This was the battle of the early Christian apologists. And in this conflict Athanasius takes his share. In his work "Against the Heathen" he vigorously attacks the whole structure of paganism. This he does to make room for

Christ. Other things are preparatory to exalting Christ and His cross. It is an interesting thing to enter the lists of long ago, with this young man, so eager to attack falsehood and to defend the faith. He begins with the very nature of evil, insisting that it is not a natural part of life, and is not the result of dualism in the world. Evil results from the misuse of free will.

The vials of his wrath are poured out upon idolatry, and the wealth of his scorn on the innumerable mythologies of heathenism. The arguments for idolatry are held up, then struck remorselessly to the ground, while the horror of human sacrifice and the immorality of paganism are given as proof that its fruits are evil.

Nature is not to be confused with God. Rather does nature reveal God. As the masterpiece of art suggests the artist who made it, so nature points to God.

The soul, its immortality, its power to know God, except for sin, and even then its power to know him through creation, are insisted upon.

The work is an apologetic for the immanent God, distinct from nature, and ruling it with constant intelligence and complete power.

Behind this work we feel a mind of real strength,

of quick alertness, and a large outlook on the life and thought of the time. There is an elevation of tone about the work and a certain ease and balance of style which command the respect of the reader. It is an old battle into whose strife we are brought, and a fought-out battle. But to Athanasius it was a very real battle, and he used his weapons well.

In his work "On the Incarnation," Athanasius comes to deal with Christianity itself. But he has a taste for a well rounded statement. So he begins with the Creation, then the creation of man, and what he lost through sin in relation to life and knowledge. To restore what man has lost you need the Incarnation.

There is an extended treatment of the death and resurrection of Christ, showing how these were part and parcel of what he was to do for men. Now Athanasius feels that he has come to the center of the faith. It has been a long way—from the attack of heathenism to the uplifting of Christ crucified and resurrected—but this is the goal of the journey. To unbelieving Jews he insists that this is the goal toward which their own Scriptures move. To unbelieving Greeks he declares that their own philosophical principles leave room for an incarnation. And once and again he joyously insists on one great argument, the effect of Christianity on the lives of

individual men and women, and on the race at large. Transformed lives and a society in process of transformation, are facts with which the opponent of Christianity must deal. "What hath Christianity wrought!" expresses in a sentence his triumphant plea. The Incarnation, the atoning death of Christ, the resurrection, all become credible in the light of Christ's power in the lives of men.

What a Christian outlook this young theologian of the fourth century possessed. He looked over the wastes of heathenism, the barren places of philosophy, the rigid fruitlessness of Judaism, and then turning from all this he looked upon the fertile fields of his own faith. And all this wonder of new life, all this fertility, he traced with unerring instinct to the incarnate, dying, risen Christ.

The future might be uncertain to this young Alexandrian. But he was well equipped. He understood the adequacy of Christ. And he understood the failure of everything else. It is good to think of his trained and polished mind. It is good to think of his innate ability and strength. It is best to think of his Christian insight. This insight came from a life which out of struggle had found its goal in Christ. As long as the incarnate Son of God was at the center of his life and thought, all really important things in the future would be secure.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RISE OF ARIANISM AND THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA.

NO THEOLOGICAL conflict in the history of the Church has exceeded in importance the struggle with Arianism. Of this conflict Athanasius was the hero. To it he gave the energy of his life, the skill of his intellect, and the devotion of his heart. To save the faith was his ambition, and no personal motive caused him for a moment to be disloyal to this great endeavor.

We must now turn our attention to the rise of Arianism, and at the very beginning we need to remind ourselves of the attitude with which we should approach the study of a great heresy. Men once thought of heresies as undiluted evils, inspired by the Prince of Evil. Now we have learned better. "A heresy is usually a genuine hunger eating the wrong fruit."

It is quite as important to understand a heresy as to condemn it. And often there are truths disproportionately, and without true perspective, ex-



pressed in even the greatest heresies. On the other hand, there were false and imperfect attitudes out of which false teaching grew, and with some men the very fascination of a particular heresy might be that they believed it to make room for that in their own lives, which was really false and evil.

In the study of Arianism, then, we may expect to find that its root was in real problems which puzzled earnest men, and that its testimony was not altogether without relation to what was actually true. This we will need to keep clearly in mind in order to be just when we see how fundamentally wrong and how full of dire possibilities for the faith Arianism as a whole really was.

The Church at Alexandria had learned to dread one theological danger, Sabellianism. Now Sabellianism, as we have seen, stood for the unity of God, at the expense of the reality of the Trinity. One God with three manifestations was its standpoint. It left no room for personal distinctions in the Godhead. It was one God who made himself known, now as Father, now as Son, and now as Holy Ghost, according to the Sabellians. They were not willing to admit three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Now, the very fact that men had learned to dread this danger, made it possible that they would receive the directly opposite error with open arms. And the directly opposite error was Arianism, which so emphasized the personality of the Son that it really got Him out of the Godhead altogether.

But there was a deeper reason for the attractiveness of Arianism. It had taken the world a long time to learn the lesson of Monotheism. But it was beginning to learn it. The unique dignity and adequacy of the conception of one true God was beginning to dawn upon the minds of men. When they contrasted the infinite number of pagan gods with the Great Only One of the Jews, the advantage was quite evidently with the latter. A type of mind which reacted from Polytheism was being produced. Just this type of mind was both attracted and puzzled by the doctrines of Christianity. Its lofty Monotheism was very attractive. But did it actually have a Monotheism to offer after all? What about the Divine Son, and the Divine Spirit, professed as a part of the Christian faith? Could one believe in these in such a way that the unity of God was perfectly protected? It was a difficult problem enough, and no wonder that men's minds were staggered by it. Arianism was an attempt to solve the problem. It saved the unity of God by

sacrificing the actual divinity of the Son. It was a poor solution. It cost too much. But it was not strange that many earnest men did not see this then and accepted the solution with eagerness and relief.

There was still another reason which drew men to Arianism. A widespread philosophical attitude made men think of God, not only as the Infinitely High, but as the Infinitely Far. There was a tendency to so exalt God as to put Him out of reach of humanity. There was a philosophical belief in a God infinitely removed.

This had expressed itself already in the Church, in the teachings of the Gnostics. The Gnostic asserted that God was so high that He needed intermediaries between Himself and the world. He made and governed the world through them. It had even been asserted that the Jehovah of the Jews was such an intermediary of the Really Most High.

Gnosticism was repudiated by the Church, but the feeling of God's remoteness still remained. And this feeling found itself answered to in Arianism.

According to Arianism, the Son, high as He was, was infinitely lower than the Father. He did not even understand the Father. He was the great intermediary between the Father and the world.

What has been said will help us to see how profoundly related Arianism was to the human mind and to the thought of the time. It was no accident, but a natural outgrowth, of the Church's grapple with the problem of its Lord—an outgrowth to be studied, condemned, and then uprooted. And this is what the Church set about doing when it became really conscious of what Arianism meant.

Arius himself is said to have been a native of Libya. He belonged to the school of Antioch, and was a pupil of Lucian. It is not improbable that in the teachings of Lucian there were elements which fructified in later Arianism. Arius came to Alexandria and is said for a time to have allied himself with the Meletians, who were a strong schismatic party. This resulted in his deposition by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, who had ordained him deacon. Later he became reconciled to Achillas, the successor of Peter, and was made presbyter and put in charge of an important Church. When the see of Alexandria became vacant he was prominent enough to be a significant rival of Alexander. The latter was elected, however, according to some testimony, Arius chivalrously transferring his vote to Alexander.

About the year 319, the flames of controversy

burst out. The very beginning of the controversy is veiled in obscurity, but Arius is said to have accused Alexander of Sabellian tendencies, and to have asserted that there must have been a time when the Son was not.

Alexander seems to have been inclined to be very patient at first, but as the views of Arius gained hold on the minds of men, the bishop sent him a letter, signed by most of the clergy of Alexandria (Athanasius among them) in which he endeavored to lead Arius to give up his views. This letter was ineffective, however, and Alexander summoned a synod of the bishops of Egypt and Libya and deposed Arius and his followers.

It will be worth our while to see exactly what were the views of Arius at this time, according to those who condemned him. Here is the statement given in the encyclical letter of Alexander, written at this time.

"The novelties they [Arius and his followers] have invented and put forth contrary to the Scriptures are these following: God was not always a Father, but there was a time when God was not a Father. The Word of God was not always, but originated from things that were not; for God that is has made him that was not, of that which was not;

wherefore there was a time when He was not; for the Son is a creature and a work; neither is He like in essence to the Father; neither is He the true and natural word of the Father; neither is He His true wisdom; but He is one of the things made and created, and is called the Word and Wisdom by an abuse of terms, since He himself originated by the proper Word of God, and by the Wisdom that is in God, by which God has made not only all other things, but Him also. Wherefore He is by nature subject to change and variation, as are all rational creatures. And the Word is foreign from the essence of the Father and is alien and separated therefrom. And the Father can not be described by the Son, for the Word does not know the Father perfectly and accurately, neither can He see Him perfectly. Moreover the Son knows not His own essence as it really is; for He is made for us, that God might create us by Him, as by an instrument; and He would not have existed had not God wished to create us. Accordingly, when some one asked then, whether the Word of God can possibly change, as the devil changed, they were not afraid to say that He can; for being something made and created, His nature is subject to change.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Exposition of Arius. Cf. Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers. Second Series, Vol. 4, page 70.

This early summary of the views of Arius is all the more interesting, as it has been ascribed to Athanasius, who was so near to his bishop during this period.

For holding these views then, Arius and his followers were deposed.

But it was to take far more than a synod's decision to overthrow Arius. He had a point of view full of attraction to many minds, and he was the man to make it more attractive. A man of grave and blameless life, with the bearing of an ascetic, he appealed to the imagination of the Church. He had unusual powers of personal fascination, which became part of his equipment for his great conflict. Then Arius was very clever, and very astute. A striking evidence of this is the way in which he set about to popularize his views. They were even put into the form of songs, with catching airs, so that the very street song became the vehicle for the spread of Arianism.

Thus what had been a local dispute spread and spread until the whole Eastern Church was involved in the controversy. At this stage it was brought to the attention of the Emperor Constantine.

To the statesman emperor, part heathen, part Christian, such a controversy seemed but a battle

about words. It ought to be ended at once for the good of the empire, and so he tried to deal with it, first in a summary, but kindly way.

Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, a man venerated and distinguished, whom we shall meet once and again in these pages, was sent with a letter from the emperor to Alexander and Arius, begging them to drop the controversy, each to hold to his own opinion, and not to disturb further the peace of the Church. This seemed a simple solution, but it was a solution which would not solve. It became evident to Hosius of Cordova that the situation had profounder root and involved far more actual difficulty than the emperor at all supposed. Here was a controversy which could not be brought to an end by a gesture of the imperial hand. It was, too, a controversy full of distraction to the Church, and boding ill for the future. This was made evident to the emperor. What was to be done? Constantine was a statesman. He saw things in large relations, and liked to do things in large, impressive ways. So at this juncture he seized with eagerness upon a great idea—the idea of a council of the whole Church.

There were other vexing ecclesiastical problems, such as the controversy about the date of Easter,



and the Meletian schism. All could be brought for decision to the great ecumenical council. If the voice of the whole Church spoke, surely it would be decisive. So it came about that the first general council of the Church was called, and met at Nicæa, in Bithynia, in the year 325 A. D.

Bishops from all parts of the Church—predominantly from the East—hastened to Nicæa at the emperor's bidding. It was an impressive sight. Men who spoke various languages, and represented wide differences of culture and station, old and young, those scarred by persecution, and men untouched by danger—all met here to represent the Church. As related to Arius and his views, there were three classes of persons at the council. First a few out and out Arians—Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, typical of them. Second, a small number of convinced, far-sighted opponents of the views of Arius—Alexander, his young archdeacon Athanasius, and Hosius, representative of them; and third, a great mass of men with a thorough loyalty to the faith, as they understood it, but without any adequate philosophical equipment to deal with such a problem as this. With all his ecclesiastical importance, we shall probably best place Eusebius of Cæsarea, in this class. Some things about the council do not

form very pleasant reading. The mutual accusations of the bishops—put into writing and given to the emperor and by him destroyed unread, make us feel how exceedingly human these ecclesiastical leaders were.

Constantine, with all the dazzle of his imperial regalia, the impressiveness of his person, the sense of his power, and the feeling of what he had done for the Church, made a great impression on the members of the council, many of whom were quite unfamiliar with the sights characteristic of the life of courts. And the emperor, as he looked upon an assemblage in which he beheld men with the awful marks of persecution upon them, felt an almost superstitious reverence for these representatives of the faith.

The Arians had come to the council with a good deal of confidence, evidently expecting to carry all before them. But in regard to this expectation they found unpleasant disillusionment. When Eusebius of Nicomedia, ventured to offer an out and out Arian creed it was wrathfully rejected and torn to pieces. The majority of the council might not be theologians, but there was deep and real Christian consciousness, which almost instinctively rejected bald Arianism. From that moment it was evident

that if the Arians were to win they must win by guile. And it probably did not appear that this would be very difficult.

There is a difference between being opposed to a thing and being able to form a statement which effectually excludes it. The council, as a whole, was opposed to Arianism. But right at the point of forming a creed came the danger that it would be hoodwinked.

Most of the members of the council doubtless preferred a creed expressed in Scriptural language. But just here they came upon a snare. The Arians could interpret the language of the Scripture in their own way. Their whisperings and sly nods of mutual comprehension at the mention of particular passages, made this evident.

When Eusebius of Cæsarea read a creed familiar to him from childhood, all could agree to it, but it lacked the essential quality of really protecting the Church from the belief the council was condemning. Constantine suggested the insertion of the word *Homoousion* (of one essence). This word secured the belief that the Son was not a creature, but a part of the very eternal life of the Godhead. The suggestion coming doubtless from some of the clearsighted anti-Arians, was eagerly seized upon

by them. The creed was worked over and made an impregnable fortress against Arianism, and then offered to the council for acceptance.

The majority were hardly ready for such thoroughgoing measures. But as it seemed the only way to protect their position, practically all of them signed the creed, and so this immortal document of Nicæa was adopted.

To understand the later reaction, we must keep in mind the fact that the creed was the work of a clearsighted minority, while the majority, clear-hearted as they might be, were by no means so clear-headed. Many of them could later be led to listen to such specious suggestions as the demand for only Scriptural language in a creed.

For the time, however, the avalanche was overwhelming. Even Eusebius of Nicomedia, in dastardly regard for his own temporal well being, deserted his friend Arius, and signed the creed.

Arius was sent into exile. His writings were burnt, and concealment of a copy of his writings was made a capital offense. These two proceedings are offensive enough to the modern mind. Exiling a man for even the falsest opinions is a great way from our standard of equity. And making the possession of even the most unwholesome writings a *capital*

offense, is almost inconceivable to us. It was a rude age, and used rude methods. How we would welcome the story, if we were told of even one bishop who, with Christian charity, pleaded for the mild treatment of the condemned heretic. Unhappily, history tells us of none.

The Council of Nicæa was an epoch-making event in the life of Athanasius. At the time of this first great assembly of the whole Church, his eloquence and zeal made him a marked man. Here he so vigorously opposed the Arians that he made enemies, who, as long as they lived, bayed on his track. We would like to know the detailed story of the young Alexandrian archdeacon's part in the council, but, like much else, this is shrouded in mystery. But from this time on, we may believe he was known not only to Alexandria, and to Egypt, but to the whole Church.

At any rate, here at Nicæa, in Bithynia, he received his life work. The great creed was in a peculiar sense entrusted to him. Did he realize as after a brilliant banquet, given by the emperor, the council broke up, that the great battle was not over, but only begun? He had unsheathed his sword, and now must go forth to the battle of years.

This little man "with the face of an angel" had

made a great impression on the far-gathered Christian leaders. As he moved away to return to Alexandria, a discerning man might well have exclaimed, "There goes Nicæa incarnate."

We close this chapter by quoting the great creed, the corner-stone of orthodoxy. As we read it again let us remember how it was carved into form, not as a piece of idle speculation, but to protect the faith, to keep it a faith great and strong enough to bear salvation to the world.

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible:—

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, from the essence of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, Very God from very God begotten, not made, One in essence (*homoousion*) with the Father, by Whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, and cometh to judge quick and dead.

"And in the Holy Ghost.

"And those who say, 'Once He was not,' and

'Before His generation He was not,' and 'He came to be from nothing,' or those who pretend that the Son of God is 'of other substance or essence,' or 'created,' or 'alterable,' or 'mutable,' the Catholic Church anathematizes."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series, Vol. 4, page 75.

## CHAPTER V.

### ATHANASIUS BISHOP.

WITHIN three years after the council at Nicæa, Bishop Alexander died. We are told that before his death, he called for Athanasius. The young archdeacon was away, perhaps with the hope of evading the great responsibility he foresaw approaching him. Another Athanasius responded to the bishop's call, but without noticing him, he repeated the name and continued, "You think to escape, but it can not be."

Not only the dying Alexander, but the laity of Alexandria, desired the election of Athanasius to the office of bishop. It is interesting that the people in clamoring for his election called him not only "the good," "the pious," etc., but "one of the ascetics." His sympathy with this development of Church life was evidently well known.

When the bishops of Egypt and Libya met to elect Alexander's successor, a majority voted for Athanasius, and he was duly installed in the great office.



An Arian story of the forcible seizure of the office by Athanasius is very evidently a piece of malicious slander. The formal statement by the bishops of Egypt and Libya, made ten years after, of his election by a majority of their number, makes the story quite unworthy of attention.

At about the age of thirty, Athanasius found himself one of the most powerful ecclesiastics in the world. The bishops of Egypt and Libya were subject to him, and his power and influence were vast and far-reaching. When a man who is something greater and finer than a mere ecclesiastic comes to a great ecclesiastical position, and great spiritual leadership takes the place of what too often is mere manipulation of Churchly machinery, there is cause for peculiar gratification. This had happened in the case of Athanasius. As great as the office was, the man who filled it was greater.

It is pleasant to pause in the little period of quiet which Athanasius enjoyed before his enemies closed upon him for the long and terrible battle. One is glad to think of the times of quiet in this storm-tossed life. During this period the forming of the Church in Ethiopia has been placed. A naïve, interesting tale of ancient missionary zeal it is, and we will proceed to its narration.

Athanasius was holding a synod when a person just from Ethiopia requested a hearing. He gave his name as Frumentius, and told how years before he and his brother, as boys, had accompanied a kinsman, Meropius by name, who was a philosopher and their instructor, on a voyage to Ethiopia. The vessel had put in at a Red Sea port. The savages had put most of those on board to death, but afterward finding the two boys studying their lessons under a tree, all unconscious of the tragedy, their sense of sympathy was touched, and the boys' lives were spared. First they were slaves to the king, but gaining his respect and confidence, they were advanced in position, and at his death, Frumentius became the guardian of his son. He had done his utmost while in that position for the spread of Christianity among the people. The young king had now assumed active control of the affairs of his country, and Frumentius and his brother, despite the request that they should remain, had returned to the Roman world. Frumentius presented himself to the great Alexandrian bishop to inform him of the opportunity opened before Christianity in Ethiopia, and to ask that a bishop might be sent to take charge of the work.

Athanasius was evidently much impressed with the story.

"And who," he said, "can be so fitted as yourself for such a work." The other bishops assenting, Frumentius was consecrated at once. He returned to Ethiopia and became head of the Christian Church there. His name was long remembered with honor as the father of the Ethiopian Church.

A visit about this time to the Thebaid is recorded. And a story full of quaintness is told of how Pachomius came from his monastery with a company of monks to greet the bishop, but hid himself among his monks, lest Athanasius would ordain him a priest. So he saw Alexandria's bishop without being recognized himself.

The time of quiet passed all too quickly, and the dull cloudy dawn of the day of trouble came.

The silenced Arians were not willing to take Nicæa as final, and began to stir themselves. They moved with a subtlety and caution which boded ill for the future.

Eusebius, of Nicomedia, had been banished in spite of his signing the Nicene formula, but he had friends at court, and after a time was recalled. Eusebius was a remarkable combination of astuteness and unscrupulous daring. It was not long before he had secured the recall of Arius from his exile. The emperor, great as he was in some relations,

was pliant in the hands of a man of clever diplomacy in regard to Churchly affairs.

The situation was one which required great diplomacy, and extraordinary skill, if the Arians were to regain their power. No one knew better than Eusebius that the time had not come to attack the Nicene formula. That would have been a fatal blunder, while Constantine lived. But if one could bring into disrepute the great Nicene leaders, and secure their overthrow, other features of the triumph of Arianism could be taken care of later. So one by one, men who stood for the Nicene position were attacked, but never with a frank declaration of the real reason for attack. It is said that ten of the Nicene leaders were exiled within a couple of years. The multitude who had never fathomed the real meaning of Nicæa, was not difficult to manipulate, and the court was the natural home of intrigue and readily lent itself to the aims of the Arians. The court doubtless felt a natural inclination to take sides with men whose substitution of political machinations for earnestness and spiritual leadership made them seem quite at home with its own methods and standards.

At length the time came to strike a blow at Athanasius. While he was bishop at Alexandria

and constantly increasing in popular prestige, the Arian triumph could not be said to be in sight. There could be no thought of attacking his theological opinions. He must be involved in difficulty with the emperor. He must be accused of personal misdoing, and so humiliated and overthrown. This done, the sky would begin to clear for the Arians.

Eusebius wrote to Athanasius, saying that a man whose opinions had been as seriously misrepresented as those of Arius, ought to be received to communion, and insisting that Athanasius should do this.

The carrier of the letter had suggestions of terrible consequences if the request was not acceded to. Now we find Athanasius face to face with a difficult problem. Assailed by so wily and unscrupulous a foe, how easy it would have been to find safety in compromise. How many men would have consoled themselves with comforting and seemingly pious thoughts about the peace of the Church, and then have received Arius to communion. Athanasius firmly refused. The situation became more ominous. Eusebius was no mere provincial prelate whose wishes could be ignored with impunity. He was a man of influence at court. A letter came from the emperor himself to Athanasius demanding

that he would freely admit all who desired it, and threatening to depose him from his bishopric if he refused.

Athanasius was a powerful bishop. But it was a very costly and dangerous thing for even a powerful bishop to quarrel with his emperor. Would it not be better to accede to his commands? How much confusion would be brought to the Church by an open breach. Would it not be wise to preserve a position where so much practical good was being done, where he was already so much loved, and could be of such large service, when it was only a matter of theological dispute which was at issue? Why not admit Arius to communion, secure his friendship, that of Eusebius, and the approval of the emperor, and so contribute to the prosperity of the Church?

Sophistry has a subtle penetration of its own, and such arguments would have sounded well. But Athanasius was no weakling, to go to his moral undoing attired in a cloak of religious sophistry. With firmness and dignity, he replied that "the Christ-opposing heresy had no fellowship with the Catholic Church."

The emperor himself seems to have been impressed by the reply and made no immediate at-

tempt to carry out his threat. The Arians were fertile in expedients, however, and with the failure of one plan had another ready. They had allied themselves with the Meletians, the Egyptian schismatic sect, which Athanasius opposed, and now prepared to strike the bishop through them.

Three Meletian bishops came to the emperor's palace complaining that Athanasius was levying a tax upon Egypt for Church expenses. This assuming of governmental powers was a grave offense. But two Alexandrian presbyters were at court and disproved the charge. Constantine now wrote to Athanasius desiring to see him. The bishop left Alexandria and came to the emperor. Upon his arrival his enemies had ready an even graver charge. They declared that he had sent a purse of gold to a certain Philumenus, a rebel. This Athanasius disproved without difficulty. But, unbaffled, his foes brought forth another charge, the much discussed story of the broken chalice.

The situation was this: A certain young man named Ischyrras had pretended to be a presbyter, though he had been declared only a layman by an Alexandrian council, because his ordination had come not from a bishop, but from a schismatical presbyter. Ischyrras, however, insisted on perform-

ing the duties of a presbyter at a little hamlet where his congregation consisted mostly of his own family. The congregation met at the house of an orphan boy. Athanasius being informed of this irregularity while making a tour of the region, sent a priest named Macarius to summon Ischyras to appear before him. The young man was found ill, and the bishop's rebuke was delivered through his father. When Ischyras recovered his own family deserted him, and he went over to the Meletians. After this, and upon this small basis of fact, the invention of enemies made a story with which to undo Athanasius. According to this version, Ischyras had been administering the sacrament when Macarius appeared. The latter rushed in upon him, broke the chalice, and upset the holy table. For this violence on the part of his priest, Athanasius was to be held responsible.

The bishop was far from helpless in the presence of this accusation. He proved that on the day stated, Ischyras could not have celebrated the sacrament, for it was a week-day, and Ischyras was ill and confined to his bed.

The emperor could not fail to see that the charges were the result of slander, and Athanasius returned to Alexandria with a letter from the em-



peror in which he was called a "man of God," and his enemies were condemned. So far, hatred and malice had failed, and Alexandria's bishop had triumphed. But a long illness, which we know him to have undergone, suggests how all these charges, and the bitter pursuing hatred of his enemies had weighed upon him.

Any dreams of quiet which Athanasius may have had were rudely broken. These were days of superstition, and the people's credulity was played upon in the next charge brought against the Alexandrian bishop. Arsenius, a Meletian bishop, went into hiding, and it was reported that Athanasius had caused him to be murdered. One of the dead man's hands, it was said, had been secured by the bishop for magical purposes. A human hand was exhibited in a wooden box as the very hand of the murdered Arsenius.

The friends of Athanasius were on the lookout for treachery, and began to seek the hiding place of Arsenius. His whereabouts in a certain monastery on the eastern side of the Nile being ascertained, an attempt was made to secure his person, but he was informed in time to evade those seeking him. Later, however, he was discovered in Tyre.

At first he denied his identity, but later was forced to confess that he was no other than himself.

Constantine had summoned Athanasius to Antioch for trial, upon hearing the charge of murdering Arsenius, but when he learned that Arsenius was alive, he dismissed the case in disgust. Such a succession of attempt and failure ought to have been enough to discourage the enemies of the bishop of Alexandria. But they had a steadiness of purpose worthy of a better cause. Failure only seemed to spur them to resumed attack. Their hatred was unrelenting, and they never wavered in their purpose to ruin Athanasius.

The emperor was persuaded that there was enough root to all that had been said to make it wise that the whole case of Athanasius should be submitted to a council. This was to have met at Cæsarea. Athanasius distrusted the fairness of those who were to try his case, and refused to attend. This was a bold stand and was sure to be used against him.

The emperor celebrated the thirtieth year of his reign in 335 by the dedication of a great Church on Mt. Calvary. Before the bishops went to Jerusalem a council was held at Tyre, and this Athanasius was commanded to attend. This time there was no

refusing, and he appeared at Tyre attended by fifty of his subordinate bishops. His enemies were in majority and from the first he and his contingent of bishops were treated with less than courtesy. Macarius was dragged before the council in chains and Athanasius was forced to appear as defendant, answering to wornout charges revived and revamped, with new charges thrown in to add weight and insure his final discomfiture.

When the story of the murder of Arsenius was once more hurled at him, Athanasius inquired if any one present knew Arsenius. Many replied that they did. Athanasius led out a man with face closely covered. When he told him to raise his head, those present beheld Arsenius before them. This was a brilliant stroke, and when first one hand and then the other was drawn from the man's cloak, Athanasius ironically remarked that he did not suppose God had given more than two hands to any man. One of those principally concerned in the Arsenius charge was so taken back by all this that he fled from the room. Others found refuge in an appeal to superstition, and cried out that it was an illusion of magic. This so influenced the crowd that Athanasius barely escaped with his life.

The old story of Ischyra and the broken chalice

had been resurrected, and it was decided to send a commission to the scene of the supposed grave irregularity to learn the real facts. Eagerness for the truth was manifested by sending men ahead to get evidence against Athanasius into form and the appointing of a commission opposed to him. The whole proceeding was conducted with daring disregard of everything except the desire to ruin Athanasius. Even so the commission did not succeed in getting manufactured evidence to be very damaging to the man they were plotting against.

Seeing that there was no hope of justice here, Athanasius resolved on a bold stroke. Embarking with five of his bishops, he made a quick voyage and suddenly appeared in Constantinople. As the emperor was riding into the city Athanasius suddenly presented himself before him. Constantine did not know him at first, and when he learned who he was would have passed him by, but Athanasius firmly held his ground, and with such dignity that the emperor could not choose but hear. He demanded a lawful council or hearing, in the emperor's presence. The emperor felt the weight of what Athanasius had to say, and his request was granted.

In the meantime, the council at Tyre had condemned Athanasius in his absence, and then one re-

ligious duty done, turned to another. They proceeded to Jerusalem, dedicated the great church with due impressiveness, and then received Arius into communion and again condemned Athanasius.

All this accomplished, they learned with chagrin and alarm of what had been going on at court, and the most of them answered a summons to appear before the emperor, by flight.

A few, with the artful and daring Eusebius, came to face Athanasius. Wily as always they dropped all previous charges and accused Athanasius of preventing the sailing of the Alexandrian corn ships to the capital. This clever charge of a kind of treason, which would particularly irritate the emperor, was well chosen. Athanasius declared that he was a poor man and could have done no such thing. His enemies declared that he was rich and powerful, indeed that he could do anything. His defense was cut short and he was banished by the emperor to far away Gaul. Was the emperor temporarily deceived? Or did he banish Athanasius simply to end a disagreeable controversy? Or did he send him away, as later declared by his son, that he might be out of harm's way? His motives are difficult to fathom, but the fact that he allowed no successor to be appointed to Athanasius, suggests

that he had his own opinion about the extent of his culpability.

Something less than eight years of the bishopric of Athanasius have now passed. He has encountered fierce enough storms of enmity, and at last his foes have succeeded in driving him from the city he so much loves. Dreary enough the way seems to the far-off place of his exile. But the dauntless bishop is not a man to regret the price exacted for his loyalty to his convictions. Better to be an exile in Gaul than a false bishop seated in full power at Alexandria.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIRST EXILE.

TREVES in Gaul was the seat of the government of Constantine's eldest son, whose name was also Constantine. Here Athanasius remained for a period which has been variously estimated at a year or two and a half years. He was received with much kindness by the young Constantine, and it was a time of greatly needed rest.

The city of Treves was a notable city in the empire, with fine examples of Roman buildings, situated on the banks of the river Moselle. The city was on a plain, surrounded by vine-clad hills. Treves probably seemed a metropolis to the young men of Gaul, but to Athanasius, fresh from Alexandria, it must have seemed an outpost of civilization.

At Treves, the orthodox bishop, Maximin, proved a friend to the exile, and he found comfort in the presence of some friends who accompanied him from Egypt. One of the best features of the situation was that he was allowed to correspond

with friends at Alexandria and elsewhere. In correspondence, however, there was always the risk that his letters would be seized and their contents used against him. There is quite a contrast between the life of a busy and powerful bishop in his own city, and the life of a waiting exile in a far country. Archdeacon Farrar heads his account of this period in the life of Athanasius with the words of Milton, "They also serve, who only stand and wait." A man whose life has no silent times is not to be envied. One can not doubt that Athanasius learned to know God better in these quiet days at Treves. We may think of him moving along the streets of the ancient Roman city, musing along the banks of the quiet river Moselle, or on the vine-clad hills encircling the city, or taking part in the religious life of the people among whom he was dwelling, thinking deep, long thoughts of God, and His ways, and always with yearning and prayers, thinking of his own beloved people far away in the south.

News was not lacking of the world from which he was separated. His friends had tried in vain to secure his restoration. It must have been a grateful thought that far away as he was, true hearts were cherishing his memory and longing for his return.



A startling and terrible story of the death of Arius, just in the moment of his triumph, was brought to Athanasius, and full of awful interest the tale was.

Arius had persuaded the emperor of his theological soundness. How much subtlety, and perhaps hypocrisy, he used it is difficult now to say. When he presented a creed seemingly satisfactory, the emperor is said to have declared, "If your faith is sound you have sworn innocently to its soundness, but if it is impious God will punish your perjury."

But any lurking doubts in the mind of the emperor were dissipated, and he commanded that Arius should be received into the communion of the Church at Alexandria. The primate of the city, although too weak to resist, was filled with horror at the thought. He is said to have prayed weeping, "If Arius comes to-morrow to the Church, take me away and let me not perish with the guilty, but if Thou pitiest Thy Church, as Thou dost pity it, take Arius away lest when he enters heresy enter with him."

The morning came. Arius and his friends started to the church. On the way he was taken with a violent seizure, which almost immediately resulted in his death. The circumstances painfully suggest

poisoning. And it is not beyond possibility that some fanatic may have thought he would be doing God service by murdering Arius. Naturally we hesitate to come to such a conclusion, and there is suggestion in what we know of Arius to believe that his death may have been quite natural, though so terribly sudden. In those rude days there was all too much barbaric rejoicing over the awful manner of his taking off. We are glad to believe that Athanasius did not share this feeling. Attention has been called to the fact that only he narrates the death of Arius with reserve and dignity. Strange and solemn the news would be when brought to Athanasius in Treves, and we can imagine him sadly reflecting on the life of the old man who had given such brilliant powers to the dissemination of error, and had now come to such a terrible end.

To us to-day, the life of Arius is full of suggestiveness. Did he know that he was wrong? Was he a double-minded man, or simply in error? It is not easy to believe him to have been absolutely single-minded, with the evidence his life affords. But it is a sobering reflection that even if Arius was sincere, a profounder earnestness would have made his particular error unlikely, if not impossible. Men are often sincerely wrong, because their inner lives

are superficial, because they have never had a mighty moral fight, out of which new acumen and discernment would have come.

The evil that Arius did surely lived after him. His death doubtless brought discouragement to his followers, but discouragement from which they were not long in rallying. Their inmost feeling was, "Arius is dead, long live Arianism." They were to fight great battles and to have great successes, and it was not their fault if Arianism did not become the creed of all the Christians in the whole world. Of this, Athanasius could not know, though he may have surmised, when the word came to him in his far exile that Arius was dead.

Athanasius was never to see the emperor again. Constantine had been a man of robust health and strength, but suddenly his vitality failed, and the soldier monarch entered upon a short, failing battle for his own life. Realizing that the end was near, he desired to be baptized, giving as his reason for deferring the rite until this time, a desire he had felt to be baptized in the river Jordan, as was our Lord Himself. Constantine put aside the purple, and clad in a white baptismal robe, with humble confession, was baptized. It is said he did not again assume the pur-

ple, but wore the white robe of his baptism until his death. Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, administered the rite of baptism to the emperor. This wily ecclesiastic kept his hold on Constantine until the last.

On May 22, 337 A. D., the emperor died. His body was taken in state to Constantinople, and he was finally buried in a Christian church.

Constantine had his faults, and they were glaring enough. But under all else he had a sense of the reality of Christianity. And we will remember him as he met death, reaching out for the help of the religion he had sincerely revered, though never really understood. A rude, strong man, groping at last for the Greater Strength.

To Athanasius it must have come home that much could happen in a very short time. Changes enough had come, but not full of promise. The Arians still had Eusebius—and Eusebius far out-Ariused Arius in practical skill and diplomacy. The Exile from Alexandria by no means felt that he looked out on a clear sky. We have preserved a festal letter of Athanasius, written during this first exile. He tells his people that, in spite of afflictions, distances, and machinations of enemies, he is not forgetful of his duty of announcing to them the


time of the feast. He has already written to the presbyters at Alexandria encouraging them by the reminder that "Nothing separates us from the love of Christ."

Now he reminds his people that though distances intervene between them, yet they can keep the feast together in unity of spirit, the Lord uniting them. He reminds them that through many tribulations the saint enters into the kingdom of heaven. In a brave and eager passage he dwells on what a man may learn from afflictions, and throbbing through his words comes the sense that Athanasius himself had found the secret of extracting from what he endured something which contributed to the depth and strength of his life. He remembers the sufferings of Christ, and quotes the apostle's words, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me," and "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Christ who loved us."

This letter with its warm glow of Christian feeling, reveals something of the inner life of the great bishop, and something of the sources of power which held him stanch and steadfast through the years.

One of the things Athanasius had learned was that though exiled from Alexandria, he was not ex-

iled from God. Prayer winged its flight to the great loving Father as speedily in Gaul as in Egypt. And he found himself face to face with great inner realities—he entered more deeply into the knowledge of Christ—as the way became difficult and lone. Whatever coming days might bring him, this time of exile had been fruitful for his life. If there were new problems to face, new persecutions to meet, from the quiet of the inner communion he would come with new power to meet them. So, serene in the companionship of Christ, Athanasius waited what the future might bring.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RESTORATION AND THE SECOND EXILE.

CONSTANTINE left behind him three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. They were young men whose ages were twenty-one, twenty, and seventeen. Others who might have made royal pretensions were slain by the soldiers who would have none but the sons of Constantine for their rulers. So these three youths came to be the rulers of a divided empire. The three met together and it was decided that Constantine should take the Gauls and Africa, Constantius the East, and Constans Italy and Illyricum.

Together they agreed on the restoration of Athanasius to his see. This, the elder brother had previously announced to the people of Alexandria in a letter written from Treves. It is interesting that in this letter he declares that in restoring the Alexandrian bishop, who, he says, was sent to Gaul to protect him from his enemies, he is carrying out the intention of his father. He speaks in high terms

of Athanasius, who had evidently made a most favorable impression upon him.

So it came about that in the fall of the year 337 or 338 A. D. (there is a dispute as to the year) Athanasius returned to Alexandria. He had a couple of interviews with Constantius on the way, and showed his moderation by making no attempt to work injury to any of his enemies.

It was a great day to his Church when the exiled bishop returned to his native city. The clergy of Athanasius declared it to be the happiest day of their lives. And that day was made a day of annual festival. So again the bishop took up the work of caring for the Churches under his charge.

Restoration, however, by no means meant cessation of trouble. The youth on the throne at Constantinople was to fill many a bitter cup for the quaffing of Athanasius. Constantius was of a jealous disposition, and lacked power of personal grapple and decision. The king who is a puppet of those who surround him, is a poor kind of monarch, and in the affairs of the Church Constantius proved to be this kind of a ruler. Eusebius, of Nicomedia, had now become bishop of Constantinople, and here this ecclesiastical courtier had ample opportunity for the exercise of his particular gifts.



The time had now come when not only the Arians, but Arianism could lift its head. Constantine was dead and men did not need to pretend so much formal allegiance to the Nicene formula as had seemed necessary in his presence. Busily moved the wheels of ecclesiastical machinery, and ere long the emperor was safely held by the Arian leaders. Their methods, to be sure, were not always dignified. Even the palace eunuchs must be used if the emperor was to be secured. But the main thing to Eusebius and his friends was the result,—and the result was accomplished. With an emperor ready to do their bidding, of course it was not long until a blow was aimed at Athanasius. He was blamed for violence, which was said to have accompanied his return to Alexandria. It was declared that he had diverted corn, which was to go for the relief of widows as a bounty from the emperor. Answers to these charges were ready, but they do not seem to have received much attention. An intruder, Pistus by name, an Arian, was sent to Alexandria to assume the office of bishop in the place of Athanasius, and three ecclesiastics were sent to Rome to secure the recognition of Pistus by Julius, Bishop of Rome.

Athanasius was not only a great Christian and

a great theologian, but he was a man of very great practical resourcefulness. He could move with rapidity and effective energy, when it was necessary. He now held a synod of about a hundred bishops in Alexandria. The whole situation was canvassed and a strong encyclical letter was prepared in his defense. This letter has come down to us, and is a valuable source of material for the life of Athanasius. Egyptian presbyters were sent with this to Julius at Rome. Thus it came about that when the Arian deputies arrived at Rome they were faced by fully equipped friends of Athanasius. So nonplused were they that their leader soon departed unceremoniously in the night. The other Arians asked that Julius would convene a council to decide the matter, and himself act as judge. In the meantime, other things were happening in the East. Athanasius was declared blameworthy from another standpoint. He had been deposed by the council at Tyre, and had returned with only secular authority, without a reversal of the decree by any ecclesiastical body. This was an irregularity, and a grave one. It seems just a little comical to think of the Arians, with all their dependence on State aid, blaming Athanasius for the same thing. As for the point at issue, the Alexandrian bishop doubtless

felt that the corrupt and unworthy council of Tyre had forfeited all right to ecclesiastical recognition. The question thus raised, however, was an important one, though a clearer atmosphere was needed in order that it might be seen in all its significance. The only real settlement would come when the principle would be recognized that the State is not to interfere with the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church. Meantime, in the situation in which he found himself, and with all the environments of the time, we can not blame Athanasius for allowing himself to be restored by imperial authority.

A synod now met at Antioch, which formally deposed Athanasius. It had become evident that Pistus was not the proper man for his place, and a certain Gregory, of Cappadocia—an Arian sympathizer, of course—was put forward instead. The next thing in this triumphant progress of Arianism, was to get rid of Athanasius and to place Gregory securely in his place. A governor, who seems to have been favorable to Athanasius, was replaced by one who could be used for the furtherance of the plans of the Arians. This governor, Philagrius, attacked the Church of St. Quirinus and gave encouragement to the mob who perpetrated cruel outrages. Athanasius was living

at this time in the Church of St. Theonas. Knowing that he was aimed at in the disturbance, he retired from the city, first having administered the rite of baptism to many. In his place of retirement, he composed a letter giving an account of the outrages.

Gregory now entered the city, and angered by the coldness of his reception, caused new disturbances and persecution. On Good Friday, it is said, thirty-four women were scourged, and on Easter, Christians sent to prison. A reign of cruelty and injustice followed. It was not a very auspicious beginning for a new episcopate, and a strange way of celebrating the Easter season in the Christian Church.

To Athanasius these horrors must have been full of heart-break. He contrived to escape, and gaining a ship, sailed for Rome 339 or 340 A. D. (another difference of opinion here).

It was a dark day for Alexandria,—a pagan governor, a persecuting bishop, and the real father of the flock departing for a new exile.

Gregory even went so far as to torture captains of ships, to get them to take his "letters of communion." A document of severe indictment against Athanasius was now formulated, and signed by Arians and heathens. This document, accusing

Athanasius of capital crimes, was entrusted to Philagrius to be put into the hands of the emperor himself.

Athanasius spent several years as an exile in Rome. He was kindly received by Julius, the Roman bishop, and again his time of exile proved a time of rest. Constantine II met his death in this period, and in him Athanasius lost a friend. But Constans was ready to befriend him. In fact, before leaving Alexandria, Athanasius had sent to Constans at his request copies of the Scriptures.

Rome was at this time something of a rendezvous for deposed prelates, and Athanasius found himself in the company of others who had been deposed from their sees.

One thinks with much interest of the impression the "Eternal City" must have made on the great exile. Rome was still a city full of wonder, if not now the actual capital of the empire. The seven hills with their magnificent architecture, the river Tiber still flowing, as through many a century of Roman life, the evidences everywhere of an ancient and mighty center of civilization, these must have been full of interest to Athanasius, and all the more because this city and the civilization it represented were different from his own. The life, Athanasius

knew, was brilliant, endlessly inventive, full of subtle insight. Rome stood for solidity and strength, rather than versatility. Rome meant law with all the steadiness and strength and all the weakness of legalism. The two types of thought have each found a place in the life of the Church. The Roman has had far too large a place. Its legal logic has lacked vitality, and has frozen some theologies into something very like cold rigidity. We have yet something to learn from the Greek.

The Rome of the time of Athanasius did feel the influence of the Greek, as represented by him. In the first place he confirmed its orthodoxy. In Athanasius was found more than orthodox correctness of thinking. He was orthodoxy alive. The Nicene formula throbbed in his blood. It is difficult to estimate the degree of the theological influence of the years he spent in Rome upon the Church there. But we may be sure it was not small. In him the East gave its best to the West.

Another influence resulting from this stay at Rome, was not so desirable. Up to this time asceticism had been regarded with small favor at Rome. But Athanasius believed in it. As we have seen, he had a very high regard for the monk, Antony, and had himself been called an ascetic.

We can readily understand in Athanasius the

rise again and again of the feeling, "Good-bye, proud world, I'm going home." And in that day, before the glaring defects of asceticism had become evident, it would be expecting too much to ask that Athanasius should have foreseen them. Nevertheless one is sorry that Athanasius may be called in a sense the father of Western monasticism. An error is always more powerful when it gains the support and influence of a great and good man. "In the world, yet kept from evil," was the Savior's ideal, and if the Church had always understood this, how many perversions and abnormalities would never have been recorded in its history. The prophet Jeremiah would like to have found "a lodge in some vast wilderness," but the Divine will held him to his hard task with men. So always the Christian's place is in the world, in the center of its throbbing, moving life, and there he is to live, not by evasion and compromise, but witnessing, and when necessary fighting, for God. The Christian is a man who in the world stands for God. Much of this emphasis was to be felt in days long after Athanasius. But at this time the man who fled from the world was regarded with veneration. Athanasius shared this feeling. It was one of the mistakes of a great man.

Julius, Bishop of Rome, was now ready to deal with the problem of Athanasius by means of a council, as suggested by Arian deputies themselves. The council was summoned to meet at Rome. When the Eusebians saw that the council would be without State control, and that they would be without means to control it, they at once decided to have nothing to do with it. The representatives of Julius who had come to them were kept waiting for a long time, and at last dismissed with a reply a good deal less than courteous. Upon receiving it, Julius did not make it public at once, hoping that some Eusebians would yet appear. In this, however, he was disappointed, and at last he held a council without them. More than fifty bishops assembled at Rome, and went into the whole question of Athanasius's guilt or innocence. Their conclusion, after weighing evidence which had previously been sent against him, and hearing witnesses in his favor from Egypt, was to vindicate Athanasius completely. Marcellus of Ancyra, who was also an exile at Rome, was likewise vindicated by this council, with less reason probably, so far as his theology went, than was the case with Athanasius.

Bishop Julius now had the task of communicating the decision of this council to the Eusebians at



Antioch, and this he did in a letter which has been called one of the strongest documents of the whole controversy. It is characterized by dignified kindness in its treatment of those he is forced severely to condemn. This letter is preserved in one of the works of Athanasius.

The enemies of the exiled bishop, meanwhile, were not idle. Athanasius learned from bitter experience that they were never idle! Now they dealt with him through the council held at Antioch on the occasion of the dedication of the Golden Church begun by Constantine.

Ninety-seven bishops met here, and through the influence of the Arians, the deposition of Athanasius was confirmed. Now an attempt was made to have a creed adopted which would take the place of the Nicene formula (though this taking the place was to be done by stealth). The mass of the council was not frankly Arian, and when a creed, too evidently Arian, was offered, another was put forward in its place. This really left room for Arianism at least by a possible interpretation, and got rid of the word the Arians hated, *homoousion*. Another creed of Arian tendency was circulated at this council, and still another is said to have been falsely put forward as coming from it. There was a real

jumble of creeds. But under it all what was really happening was this: The conservative element was trying to find a way to protect the faith without the exact Nicene formula. Later when they found this to be impossible, they would move back toward the Nicene creed again.

An endeavor was now made by the Arians to secure the support of the Emperor Constans. Arian prelates were sent to him at Treves with a creed purporting to be that of the council at Antioch. This creed seemed a wonderful approach to the Nicene, but was to open the way cleverly to departure from it. The orthodox bishop, Maximin, was still at Treves, and his influence would be all on the side of a rigid loyalty to the Nicene creed. The Arian prelates were dismissed without having accomplished their object.

The Church was then divided. The West had declared for Athanasius, the East against him. And regarding a creed, it was coming to be in a chaotic state.

Constans remembered his father's great council of the whole Church, and it seemed to him the time had come for another. He wrote to his brother Constantius. The latter consented, and so the way was opened. Sardica was fixed upon as the place for the council's meeting.

Athanasius was summoned by Constans to meet him at Milan. Here he was kindly received by the emperor, and it became evident that he could hope for a more favorable turn of affairs in regard to himself. He must have heard with joy and hope, of the great general council to be held. Vindication there would mean not simply a personal triumph, but the triumph of the cause he loved and the privilege of returning to his own city, and the care of the Churches whose ecclesiastical head he was. The Emperor Constans later summoned Athanasius to follow him to Treves, where he met the aged Hosius—of Nicene fame. It is pleasant to think of these two men who cared so deeply for the faith and who sympathized so profoundly in their interpretation of it, meeting and finding mutual encouragement in each other's society. Well, perhaps, that neither could look over the years and see the terrible cloud hanging on the far horizon.

In the year 343 A. D.—the same year when the Council of Sardica met—Eusebius, of Nicomedia, died. The end found him in full enjoyment of his successful cause. On the surface, one could call his life one of extraordinary achievement. Overcoming difficulties he had secured the confidence of two emperors. He was a man to be taken account of.

No man understood the ecclesiastical situation better. No man knew better how to secure the ends he had in view. He did things. Really one could write quite a eulogy of Eusebius, of Nicomedia, and Constantinople. But suppose we probe. Well, it is better not to probe in the case of the lives of some men, and Eusebius is one of them. The buzz of moving Churchly wheels is not necessarily the advancement of the kingdom of God. One fears that Eusebius did not have much to do with the advancement of the kingdom of God. Great Churchly position does not necessarily mean high God-centered character. This wily Churchman probably did not know much of God. He was doubtless more familiar with the ante-chamber of the emperor than the ante-chamber of the King of kings. A man of great ability? Yes. A man of astute diplomacy? Yes. A successful Christian leader? No. He fought on the wrong side, and he fought unscrupulously. The Church was poorer, more superficial, less real, because he lived. We are not sorry to say farewell to Eusebius, of Nicomedia.

The Council of Sardica met with about one hundred and seventy prelates in attendance. The majority were Westerns, who could not be hoodwinked by the Arians, and the Eusebians saw with surly in-

dignation that things were not likely to turn out according to their desires. The Easterns, therefore, shut themselves up in their lodgings, and refused to take part in the council unless Athanasius and some others, they said were under ecclesiastical condemnation, should be excluded. The reply was that charges could be brought against them and they would be most carefully weighed. They were even urged to give the charges to Hosius, the president of the council, in private. Every effort was made to lead them frankly to enter the lists and do fair battle for their position. But in vain. At length, with the notable excuse that a victory over the Persians made their return necessary, they departed, but found time at Philippopolis to hold a council of their own, in which they gave full vent to their rage, renewed charges against Athanasius and repudiated the doings of the Sardican council. They also uttered a denunciation of Hosius and Julius. A creed was added to this literary effervescence of wrath.

This proceeding did break up the unanimity of the council. It proceeded with its work, however, and after thorough consideration again was Athanasius fully vindicated. Oddly enough, Marcellus, of Ancyra, was allowed to slip through with an acquittal, too. The Nicene Creed was upheld, and let-

ters of sympathy were written to those loyal to Athanasius at Alexandria. For a time it seemed as though the West and East were to be arrayed against each other in sharp conflict. It was feared by the enemies of Athanasius that he would attempt to return to Alexandria, and orders were given that he should be beheaded if he did. Such pressure was brought on those loyal to him at Alexandria that many resorted to falsehood for safety, and many fled to the deserts.

Constans took the matter in hand, and envoys from Sardica were sent to the East to attempt to win over Constantius. It is said that Constans threatened war if Athanasius were not restored. When the bishops representing Sardica arrived at Antioch, a shameful plot was laid against them. A harlot was brought one night to their lodgings. Great was the revulsion of feeling when the plot was discovered, and Stephen, Bishop of Antioch, was found to be at the root of it. A council was held which deposed Stephen, although another Arian was put in his place. Even Constantius felt a reaction of disgust, and Gregory, the intruded bishop of Alexandria, having died, expressed his readiness to allow the return of Athanasius. The whole State policy toward orthodox Christians in Alexandria

was changed from persecution to tolerance, and Constantius wrote to Athanasius asking him to return. Athanasius was wise enough not to accede too readily, and months had passed and Constantius had written three times before he actually complied with the request. Before returning, Athanasius visited Julius at Rome, and Constans at Treves. Julius wrote a beautiful letter of congratulation to the Church at Alexandria on the restoration of Athanasius. It is interesting, and suggestive, too, that Athanasius in quoting it, omits a paragraph in his own praise, which we know from other sources.

Again Athanasius met Constantius at Antioch. He was graciously received and promised future protection. His readiness and skill are seen in the fact that when Constantius asked that the Arians might have a Church in Alexandria, he replied that they might if the anti-Arian party in Antioch would be allowed a Church in that city. This was too fair a request for denial if the emperor pushed his demand. So the matter was dropped.

From Antioch, Athanasius went to Jerusalem, where he was greeted with the congratulations of an orthodox council, met for the purpose of honoring him. Surely it was fitting that in the city so closely associated with the ministry of "the Man of Sor-

rows, and acquainted with grief," his servant who had suffered so much because of his loyalty to his Master, should be received with welcome and honor.

At length, on October 21, 346 A. D., Athanasius returned to Alexandria. This return has been called the crowning event of his life. He was met as though he had been a conqueror returning from a great war. And, indeed, was he not? A hundred miles from the city the people met him. The cheering of the enthusiastic multitude, the incense-freighted air, the illuminated and feasting city, made the day and night one long to be remembered. If a man wanted a standard of comparison for some splendid display of a future time, this one at the return of Athanasius was ready for him. And no wonder the people gave such a remarkable expression to their gladness. It must have seemed almost miraculous that their bishop, after these long years of exile, should return. In his absence how they had longed for him. How his virtues had stood out in their memories. And now in spontaneous eager devotion, the city clamored out its magnificent welcome.

When Athanasius himself describes his return, he does not dwell on these external things, but on the deeper effects, the practical inspiration to Christian living and the relation to the profound things in



men's lives. He is right in this, and we do well to remember that it is not the external glitter of a man's life, but his power to move other men Godward in inner devotion and practical living, that is full of real and lasting significance. None the less we are glad to think of Alexandria all alight, the city given over to rejoicing over the return of the great bishop. How he deserved it, and what a pure joy it was. No multitudes slain on distant battlefields formed the gloomy background of this conqueror's triumph. No downcast, broken captives were led in chains beside his chariot. A Christian man had been steadfast as a rock, and had been vindicated, and for this a city celebrated. It is good to remember it.

As Athanasius looked out upon the brightly lighted city that night, it is not hard to conjecture what his thoughts were. A glad thankfulness to God, who had so wonderfully delivered him from his enemies, and a new consecration of the powers of his manhood to the Christian service of the city he loved. And we may be sure that he lifted the whole of Alexandria in prayer to God ere his eyes closed in sleep. The Master Himself must have seemed very near to the great Egyptian city that night.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PERIOD OF THE SECOND RESTORATION.

FOR over nine years Athanasius now remained in the actual position of bishop of Alexandria. It was his longest period of uninterrupted occupancy of his office. The first years of this period were years of quiet. It must have been a great joy to the bishop to see the Church progressing and prospering under his leadership. Constantly his position became stronger until he held the heart of Egypt. With the Church at large his relations were gratifying. Over four hundred bishops communicated with him. Perhaps at times he would almost feel that his troubles were over.

Valens and Ursacius, who had been his accusers, withdrew their accusations and recanted their former position. In Alexandria men came to him at night to tell him that they had taken the Arian attitude through fear and not through conviction. His presence was a deep moral and religious tonic to the city. Its whole life was elevated, and all good things had new emphasis.

During these years of quiet Athanasius again turned his attention to literary work. He gathered together documents—now of priceless historic value—relating to his own long struggle. These form the “Apology Against the Arians.” These documents cover a period of fifteen years, and include, first documents in connection with the Council of Sardica, and second, documents belonging to a period previous to that time. These give us a clear account of the charges against Athanasius and his vindication. They deal with personal matter rather than theological matters. Two sections were added at a later time, referring to after events.

Athanasius wrote two doctrinal treatises at this time. The first is “On the Nicene Formula.” After a brief reference to the Nicene Council, he discusses the meaning of the word Son, lifting it above all that a creature could be. He defends the use of unscriptural terms to express and defend Scriptural meaning. He refers to authorities in support of the council, and attacks the Arian symbol “unoriginate.”

The other doctrinal treatise deals with the “Opinions of Dionysius,” a previous Alexandrian bishop, whose views had been construed in an Arian sense, against which Athanasius protests.

Athanasius wielded a facile pen. He had a mind

which could make close distinctions, and he could valiantly do battle with his pen.

The monastic movement was coming to be of great importance in Egypt at this time. Athanasius, we are told, put himself at its head, and his influence was such as to check the tendency to extravagance inherent in the system. The monks regarded him with a warmth of admiration and loyal allegiance, which were to prove of great service in after years.

The time of peace was to come to an end all too soon, however. Multitudes of earnest people with no gift for close thinking were dissatisfied with the Nicene Creed. Constantius had Arian sympathies, and no real love for Athanasius. There was a strong Arian party, and a new extreme type of Arianism was making itself felt.

In the year 350 A. D., an event occurred which must have seemed ominous to Athanasius. This was the death of Constans. The soldiers of Constans had revolted under Magnentius. The emperor had been murdered and Magnentius declared his successor. Whatever the life of Constans, he had been a true friend to Athanasius, and with the protection of his influence gone, the Alexandrian bishop may well have seen danger ahead.

Magnentius was probably shrewd enough to sus-

pect that Athanasius would have a thorny path, with Constantius as his sole protector. At any rate, he sent a deputation to Athanasius which gained no encouragement from him, but was greeted with emphatic and tearful expressions of regret over the death of Constans.

Constantius, too, probably felt the need of the friendship of the powerful Athanasius at this crisis, when he was about to enter into a struggle with Magnentius. He sent a kind letter to the bishop, intended to give him assurance of the permanence of his friendship, and the security of his position at Alexandria.

In the Egyptian metropolis prayers were offered for the safety of Constantius, at the desire of Athanasius, and the people made the prayer "O, Christ, help Constantius."

The emperor at least kept his promise to Athanasius until after the defeat of Magnentius. This occurred in <sup>351</sup>451 A. D.

Valens and Ursacius had now repudiated their recantation, and were again to be listed with the Arians. In connection with the defeat of Magnentius at Mursa, an incident occurred which increased the influence of Valens, and through him the influence of the Arians. The emperor awaited the

news of the issue of the battle in a church with only Bishop Valens with him. The latter skillfully learned the news of the battle's result before the emperor's messengers arrived, and announced the defeat of the enemy to Constantius, as a revelation from heaven. This greatly impressed the emperor, and fed his vanity at the same time.

Constantius emerged from his military operations the ruler of all of Christendom. The divided empire was once more united under one head.

Now he could turn his attention to designs which had probably found quiet shelter in his own mind for a long time. One of them was the ruin of Athanasius, another was the triumph of Arianism.

In 353 A. D., Athanasius, believing that he had cause for alarm, sent envoys to represent his cause in the presence of the emperor. A few days after their departure, he received a message from Constantius commanding him not to send envoys, but saying that his own request to come to the court at Milan was granted. Now Athanasius had made no such request. He at once detected in the message a covert attempt to get him away from Alexandria. So he replied with combined astuteness and courtesy, that as he had not requested to be received at court, he hesitated to act on a misconception. The mes-

senger of the emperor left Alexandria with this reply.

Constantius held a council at Arles, which condemned Athanasius. Even the Roman delegate, Vincent, united in the condemnation. Only Paulinus, Bishop of Treves, held out in loyalty to the bishop of Alexandria. He was banished for his refractory loyalty to his conscience. Here was a suggestion of the way in which the emperor would deal with those who opposed him. Liberius, who had succeeded Julius as bishop of Rome, felt deeply the unfaithfulness of Vincent, the representative of Rome at Arles, and is said to have written to Hosius, "I have resolved rather to die for God than abandon the truth." Both Liberius and Hosius were soon to be put to the test.

At the Lenten season in 354 A. D., Athanasius faced a peculiar problem at Alexandria. Through the effective Christian work carried on under his supervision, interest had so increased that the churches were not only crowded but packed. At this time some had been injured in the pressure of thronging people. Athanasius was urged to hold the Easter services in a great church—the Cæsa-reum, which was a gift of Constantius. This church was unfinished and not yet dedicated. Because the

property technically belonged to the State, and the using of an undedicated church could be construed as an ecclesiastical irregularity, Athanasius hesitated to comply with the request. The people insisted that rather than go on with the present crowded condition, they would prefer to keep the Easter in the open country. At last Athanasius yielded. This his Arian enemies were ready enough to use against him. Other accusations such as his neglect to obey the emperor, when he received the letter from him which practically summoned him to the court, the claim that he had used his influence with Constans against the emperor, and that he had had relations with Magnentius, were hurled against him. All these he dealt with in his "Apology to Constantius," the most finely constructed piece of writing he left behind him. This defense, perhaps, he originally intended to deliver to the emperor. But if such thoughts were in his mind they had to be given up when he learned how deep was the emperor's hostility.

In 355 A. D. a large council met at Milan and condemned Athanasius under the lash of the emperor. There were those here who defended the Alexandrian bishop. The emperor was told that Athanasius must be judged by bishops, not by the



emperor, and that he must not confuse canons with imperial decrees. "Canons," Constantius cried out, "What I wish, that is a canon." This was the brief and audacious declaration of the emperor. And it boded very ill for the future. Men found what it cost to be loyal to Athanasius against the emperor. A hundred and forty-seven persons, clergy and laity, are said to have been banished. There is no better evidence of the power of Athanasius than the wary way in which the emperor approached him to secure his downfall. First he armed himself with the decisions of two councils, dictated to by him; then he proceeded to deal with men loyal to the great bishop and the cause for which he stood. How it must have torn the heart of Athanasius as he thought of the bishops, clergy, and laymen suffering in exile for the Nicene position and for him.

During these years his alert eyes had been watching the signs of the times. And he could but feel that the situation was becoming more and more ominous for himself.

We have preserved to us a letter which was written to Dracontius, a monk, who had been elected to the office of bishop, but was trying to escape it. Athanasius summons him to the office. He is said to have obeyed and to have been exiled afterward. It

was a costly thing to be a faithful orthodox bishop in those days. The time had now come for a decisive blow to be struck at Athanasius. In the summer, 355 A. D., an imperial notary named Diogenes came to the city and used every effort to dislodge Athanasius. He failed, however, and left Alexandria in December. In January of 356 A. D., the General Syrianus, accompanied by a notary named Hilarius, came to the city. Athanasius seeing the trend of events, asked Syrianus if he had any letter from the emperor. He replied that he had not. Athanasius then produced the letter the emperor had written to him previously promising protection. The bishop had very strong support in Alexandria, and, under pressure, Syrianus promised not to proceed against Athanasius without a letter from the emperor. This promise he made "by the life of the emperor" himself. This form of solemn declaration does not seem to have been considered very binding by Syrianus, for in a few months he broke it. If he had sworn by the faithfulness of the emperor, perhaps one could have understood the oath's not being very binding.

On February 8, 356 A. D., Athanasius was holding an all-night service in preparation for the communion service of the following day, at the Church

of St. Theonas, one of the largest in the city. Syrianus, with five thousand soldiers, surrounded the church. Athanasius did not lose his presence of mind. He sat down on his throne and ordered the deacon to read the 130th Psalm, the people responding, "for His mercy endureth forever." Soon the soldiers had burst in. Athanasius refused to escape until the people had departed in safety. Meanwhile arrows were flying, bright swords were gleaming murderously in the lamplight, and the soldiers shouting fiercely. Some of the people were trampled to death, but most escaped, and at last some monks and clergy seized Athanasius, now in a fainting condition, and eluding the soldiers, succeeded in escaping with him. When he revived, he was full of thankfulness at the wonderful escape, and recognizing that if his life was to be preserved he must go into hiding, disappeared, no one knew whither.

So another period of his life passed by. During these years he had become so powerful that we have seen how carefully even the emperor felt it necessary to move in proceeding against him. If he had been a false man this power might have been misused and made the means to the accomplishment of ends of his own. But power to Athanasius meant just the larger opportunity to serve Christ, and to

advance His kingdom. All his resources he used for these great ends. It is a great man who can stand on a summit of influence without tottering. This bishop did not become dizzy. He was great enough and true enough to stand the strain.

When exile now came it was only a great manifestation of the power of Athanasius. A nation was his. The whole country became his protector. The emperor pursued him in vain. Egypt opened its sheltering arms and held him safe.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE THIRD EXILE.

WHEN Athanasius first retired from Alexandria, it was his purpose to seek a personal interview with the Emperor Constantius. Once he had personally appealed to his father, Constantine, and why might this not be effective with the son? With so many intermediaries, serious misunderstandings might arise, and the acts of a man's subordinates do not always represent him. But if Athanasius could see the emperor, face to face, could set before him the whole situation in its true light, surely there would be hope of justice. So Athanasius felt, but as news of fierce persecution and of the placing of a most unworthy man in the see of Alexandria came, he must have felt more and more the uselessness of such an appeal. And when he learned that the emperor had written a letter referring to him as a criminal, and another to Ethiopia, asking that Frumentius be sent to the "venerable George," that he might be corrected in respect of errors imbibed

from "the wicked Athanasius," and receive knowledge of the Supreme God, it became evident to him that he had nothing to hope from the emperor.

We must look a little more closely at what transpired in Alexandria after Athanasius left it. For a time no attempt was made to get the Churches into the possession of the Arians. But later George, a Cappadocian—a former pork contractor and a man of unenviable reputation—was sent to be bishop in the place of Athanasius. At the same time a substitute creed was offered to the people in the place of the formula of Nicæa. When Athanasius heard of this he vigorously protested in a letter to the Egyptian and Libyan clergy. He warned them against the new creed and urged them to steadfastness.

George had his carnival of persecution, and it is an ugly story as it comes down to us. Murder, banishment, and terrorizing were the order of the day. Sixteen bishops are said to have been banished and many others to have fled. Others gave a frightened submission.

George was such an intolerable man in the office of bishop that later he barely escaped with his life, so exasperated did the people become, and when, after a long absence, he finally returned into the

city again, after the death of Constantius, the people mercilessly killed him.

But the tragedy of George's death takes us far in the future, and what Athanasius now heard was the story of his reign of violence in Alexandria. Search was made everywhere for the fugitive bishop who had so strangely disappeared from view. A price was put upon his head. Men sought him with orders to bring him dead or alive. But he remained safe. He trusted in the loyalty of Egypt, and it did not fail him.

Much of his time was spent with the monks in their cells. If he was pursued word was quickly passed, and he was sent from one monastery to another. He understood these Christian men of the desert, and they loved him and would have risked anything for him.

We must not think of Athanasius as simply leading the life of a vagrant wanderer in these years of exile. He was one of the most powerful men in the Church in many ways, fugitive as he was. News of everything was brought to him, and his messages, letters, and treatises flashed back their words of encouragement, of direction, of argument to Egypt and far beyond its confines. The little man sitting on a mat in the sun-scorched desert, writing busily,

was a right royal personage, not to be omitted from the consideration of any one who would understand the life of the time.

Athanasius was very daring. He is said even to have ventured into Alexandria, and there is some ground for thinking him to have been present in disguise when bishops met in council.

This third exile of Athanasius lasted for six years. During this period he found time to take up the work of authorship. A mighty pen it was he wielded, and every word he wrote was received by his followers with eagerness. He was keeping alive the flame of loyalty to the faith as he understood it. These manuscripts written in the desert are like battle-flags from old fields of strife. Through them Athanasius spoke to the Church such stirring words as it could not refuse to hear, and having heard could not forget.

The "Apology to Constantius," to which reference has been already made, was completed. His flight from Alexandria had been stigmatized as cowardice, and he wrote an "Apology for His Flight," to defend himself from the infamy of this charge. He cites the example of the Lord and of saints of the past as a precedent for removing one's self in the time of danger. A man must be ready to



give his life as a testimony to his loyalty to the truth, if necessary, but not rashly.

The defense shows a consciousness that his enemies' anger at not being able to kill him, is the real cause of their accusation. There are some tender words about Hosius, and one finds an expression of the thought, that if it is wrong to flee, it is worse to persecute.

This work of Athanasius has a quality of practical good sense which appeals to the reader. There is no diseased hunger for martyrdom, such as sometimes appeared in the Church. There is the caution of a really brave man.

To this period belong the "Letter to Serapion," Bishop of Thmuis, giving an account of the death of Arius, and several doctrinal letters to Serapion. It has been suggested that the "History of the Arians," coming from the time of the third exile, was, in part at least, written under the supervision of Athanasius, rather than by him directly. Perhaps this suggestion is inspired rather by a desire to believe that we need not trace the fierceness and passion contained in it to Athanasius, than by more substantial arguments.

Athanasius was a man and an Oriental, besides being a saint, and in this account of the long con-

tinued cruelties of the Arians, indignation at white heat breaks out into most vigorous expression. The events described are those we have already related, and there need be no repetition of them here. We will not need to imitate the vehement, angry expressions of Athanasius, but we can surely understand them, and there are noble passages we are glad to remember. Again, in this treatise, persecution is condemned. If the Church could have learned then and for all time, the inherent evil of persecution, what a change would have been made in its history. How many a page, stained with blood need never have been written. But long centuries were to pass before the Church came to understand that persecution is a weapon no Christian ever has a right to use.

A most important series of works written by Athanasius during the third exile, is found in the "Four Discourses" (or orations) against the Arians. These discourses have been described as "the sources whence arguments have been borrowed by all who have since written in behalf of the Divinity of the Word."

The First Discourse sets Arianism and the orthodox faith sharply against each other. To Athanasius, the Arians with their Christ a creature "who once

was not," alterable, and God by courtesy of a high name, are not Christians at all. To him the Christian view sees in Christ an essentially divine person, part and parcel of the divine nature, inherently God. He deals with Arian objections and Scripture references, on which they depend, with an acute sense of their inconsistencies, and a constant sense of the things which must be preserved in a true Christian's thought about his Lord. To him splendid phrases could never deify a being who in reality was only a creature. And Christianity with the most wonderful and God-favored creature at the center of it, is Christianity no more. It was no battle about words. It was a battle about realities. And words were involved in just so much as they preserved or lost sight of the great reality for which Athanasius contended—the reality of the Godhead of Jesus Christ. This amazing insight as to what was really vital in the controversy, the strength to fight for that vital thing through years and years, and the skill to use the sword of argument with exceedingly fine effectiveness, give Athanasius his unique position as a theologian. He is at home with subtle distinctions, with delicate penetrating irony, but above all these things towers the great fact that in the midst of cloudy and hazy thinking,

he saw the true Christ—the God-man—the basis of all the hope and of all the life of the Christian Church.

The Second Discourse predominantly deals with an Old Testament text (Prov. viii, 22) on which the Arians placed great weight. Now as a matter of fact, it would be a daring thing to defend a dogmatic reference to Christ in this passage about wisdom being formed in the beginning of Jehovah's way, before his works of old. The most which can be derived from it of Messianic significance is probably a sense of the richness of Jehovah's life, which prepared the way for a belief in the Godhead, as something more than the ceaseless existence of a lonely, only one. If it is but a figure of speech it shows that even the Monotheistic Hebrew had to make the life of Jehovah rich and full. It was a mental movement, which would at least help to prepare the mind, to welcome the doctrine of the Trinity when it came. But in the days of Athanasius both sides assumed the text as a full-fledged Christian statement. So while this treatise is full of ingenuity, and its sense of what Christ was, is of the utmost value, the detail of its exegesis is not likely to prove very impressive to a modern. This must be said for Athanasius, however. He handled the

mental implements of his time in the thought forms of his time.

Indeed, he could not have done otherwise, and if he could it would have been less effective than what he actually did. A work which fit into the thinking of the time, and guided it toward the right goal, was far and away more valuable than a work whose detailed exegesis would be accepted by men, centuries afterward, but would be utterly misunderstood at the time when it was written.

Men have to live in a particular age and more or less to be held in check by its limitations. We will not think condescending thoughts of Athanasius, because his mind moved in the channels of the fourth century thought. Often the forms of his thought are but the shell, and in this controversy the kernel, the thing he was fighting for, is of eternal value. He lived in the days of bow and arrow exegesis, and we will not foolishly blame him for not using a rifle. The arrows from his quiver did their work. The Third Discourse deals principally with texts from the Gospels, and philosophical considerations suggested by them. There is one example of exceedingly poor exegesis where Athanasius seems to hold that both our Lord and Paul said they did not know a thing, which they really knew, and the

treatment of our Lord's human experience is not adequate. Future theological struggles were to make room for closer, clearer, and more satisfactory thinking than Athanasius had done in respect of some of these things. But except on his own great subject where all was clear and strong, one can not expect Athanasius to speak with equal insight. He was not a modern theologian, with centuries of Christian thinking to check, correct, and guide his own. And even modern theologians with this great heritage are by no means always satisfactory.

The Fourth Discourse is principally the refutation of a form of Sabellianism which was connected with the name of Marcellus, the friend of Athanasius. The name of the former is not mentioned, but in the discourse, Athanasius repudiates the tendency toward ignoring the distinctions in personality in the Godhead, which was the cause of distrust in Marcellus. It was important that the Church should understand that no such tendency would receive encouragement from Athanasius.

Surveying these works of the exiled Alexandrian bishop, it begins to look as if the desert might indeed become a fruitful place.

We need to remember what courage and strength of character were required to lead a man of sixty,

cast out of his bishopric and his city, with only the prospect of dreary and difficult years as a fugitive wanderer before him, to keep his hold on life, its problems, and its work, and perform such tasks of authorship as those of which these treatises are the product. The silences of the desert became vocal when they sheltered Athanasius. And men realized that the exile was so alive and so resourceful that many must have felt that he might emerge from the desert into a new future even yet.

The years of the exile of Athanasius had been years of suffering for others beside himself. The venerable Hosius, his head white with the snows of a hundred winters, had been approached with the end of securing his connivance with the emperor's plans. The aged man, father of the bishops, firmly refused. Constantius had ways of dealing with men who thwarted his plans, and he had little regard for age or ecclesiastical dignity. For a year the old man was so mistreated that at last, broken and confused, he signed an Arian Creed. But even then he would not sign the condemnation of Athanasius. Hosius lived to express his repudiation of what had been dragged from him, and died in full loyalty to the Nicene Creed.

One feels only pity for this maltreated old man,

who for a while lost his way. We are willing to remember him rather by his great years of Christian service. But for those who led him through such a hard, thorny pathway in his tottering age, we feel a very lively scorn. Constantius was paying a high price to dictate the faith of the world, and utterly defeat Athanasius.

One of the brutal methods of this persecution of Christians, by a nominally Christian emperor, was the isolation of the exiles. So separated from each other they lost the inspiration of suffering together, and of giving each other mutual encouragement. It was a cruel ingenuity which hit upon this method of breaking their wills. This method had been used with Hosius and was to be used with another bulwark of orthodoxy, Liberius, of Rome.

The emperor sent a eunuch named Eusebius to the Roman bishop to secure his acquiescence in the condemnation of Athanasius, and his communication with the Arians.

He emphasized his request by the offer of gifts from the emperor. But Liberius would not be bribed, and firmly refused. He would not even allow the gifts Eusebius brought to be accepted by one of the Churches of the city, to which they were offered.



Constantius now sent to have Liberius brought before him. If necessary, violence was to be used to bring him. To avoid the danger of rousing the city, Liberius left by night. In the emperor's presence he did not quail, but still refused to condemn Athanasius or sign an Arian creed. He was sent off to exile, spurning an offer of money from the emperor and empress. Right manfully and faithfully he had stood for the truth. But two years of exile alone were too much for him. He lost the grip of his manhood, signed the condemnation of Athanasius, and a creed omitting the great Nicene watchword. Those were hard, hard days.

One feels a sad sympathy for Liberius. But if only he had remained steadfast, what words of joyful, eager praise would leap to our lips! In the presence of his failure we feel an awed sense of what mighty and enduring courage has been needed in great crises in the Church, and how even a noble past did not save a man from painful and tragic failure in a later time of stress.

The time was one of confusing creed production. But under all the confusion the forming of new parties and new alliances, some important things were really happening. The conservative element was moving toward the Nicene position.

The two councils of Ariminum and Seleucia were called to represent the Church. Now was an opportunity to express the faith. In the Council of Ariminum men who really did not believe in Arianism were led to compromise themselves. It is a shameful story of ecclesiastical intrigue with imperial connivance. The council at Ariminum began well, but by a combination of underhand activities at last found itself closed, and the faith given over to the hands of the enemy. Valens, ingenius in duplicity, was the master of ceremonies in the undoing of the real work of the council, so that in perplexity and confusion it lost its bearings and signed the Arian creed. The men who met at Seleucia to represent the East, ended by ratifying an Arian creed, and the upshot of the whole matter was that the Church found itself, nominally at least, with its face turned away from Nicæa.

But it was more nominally than really. The world did not actually want to be Arian. A good portion perhaps felt simply the utter weariness of the conflict and wanted rest. But it was becoming evident to a man of discernment that even among those who opposed certain words in the Nicene formula, the difficulty was verbal rather than real. The conservative movement toward the Nicene position

was indeed under way. Athanasius saw this, and nobly did he take advantage of it. He wrote his "De Synodis," in which he showed the utmost kindness and sympathy for those who differed from him rather in word than reality, and opened the way for an alliance with them. He was sure the time would come when, with a fuller understanding, they would accept the very phraseology of the Nicene Creed. In the meantime the important thing was the thing held, not the mere word used to express it, and he heartily held out his hand to those who were profoundly at one with him, across the chasm of differences in phraseology.

It has been declared that Athanasius surpasses even himself in this offer of peace after years of conflict. Struggle had not crystallized in him a habit of strife. When the right time came he was ready and even eager to utter a word of peace.

But "De Synodis" is not an offer of compromise on any essential. It is not a change of front savoring of the lapse of Liberius. Athanasius saw clearly what was the vital thing in the struggle, and when he saw that a word of peace was consistent with loyalty to that vital thing, he gladly uttered it. It was a very great man who wrote "De Synodis." And over the Church many must have read it with

new appreciation for Athanasius, and for what Nicæa had really meant.

Though Athanasius did not know it, the days of his third exile were drawing to a close. Julian had escaped the general massacre which had disposed of most of those who might later make pretensions to the throne, which the soldiers had perpetrated at the time of the accession of Constantius. He had grown up to hate Christianity, and first secretly, but later openly, to embrace paganism. He was proclaimed Augustus in Paris, 360 A. D. He increased rapidly in power, and war between him and Constantius seemed imminent. But in the year 361 A. D. Constantius died and Julian became emperor. A fever had carried off Constantius and saved the empire from civil war.

At this time, George, the usurper of Athanasius's see at Alexandria, was murdered, and Julian announced that all bishops exiled by Constantius were permitted to return. Twelve days after the posting of the edict Athanasius was again in Alexandria. It is an example of the irony of history that the death of a nominally Christian emperor, and the accession of a pagan to the throne, led to the return from exile of the greatest Christian bishop alive in the Church.

With strange feelings of mingled gladness and awe, Athanasius must have found himself in Alexandria again. When he returned before it was to a city flushed with joy, and full of a new sense of the meaning of Christianity. Now the blood of George, the intruder, was upon the hands of the angry multitude, and Athanasius must have felt that the city was in a sense contaminated by the crime. But loyal, earnest hearts would be waiting to receive him. And if there was great wickedness in the city all the more was its bishop needed.

The city itself must have felt something of the meaning of his return. When Athanasius entered every good thing in the city increased in power, and every bad thing was weakened.

It was a man who could now be called old who came back to his bishopric on February 21, 362 A. D. Six years of desert exile had left their marks upon him, since he had publicly appeared in the city. But though older, he had gained in the serenity which comes of trustful heroic endurance. And he was ready to do, and to suffer more for the sake of the Divine Christ and His kingdom.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE LAST YEARS OF ATHANASIUS.

THE Emperor Julian was an enthusiastic pagan, and he heartily disliked Christianity. We are not very much surprised that he turned from a Christianity which he had seen only in a very unfavorable light. All his family, except his brother and himself, had been killed at the accession of Constantius, and he had seen the repulsive, political, and unreal side of the religion which Constantius professed. To him Christianity was an absurdity of a thousand jarring sects, and when he came to the throne it was his ambition to restore paganism, and to see all the power and influence of Christianity disappear. He did not wish to assume the rôle of a persecutor, however, and chose what seemed to him a brilliant plan. He favored the pagans, but allowed the Christians much liberty, trusting to the inner quarrels and disputes of the Church to make it ridiculous, and ultimately to lead to its downfall.

But exactly the opposite of what he hoped resulted. It was a sobering thing to all the Chris-

tians to have a heathen emperor on the throne. It drew them together, and tended to make them seek a unified front before a common foe. Further than this there was a movement toward clearing in the theological atmosphere. Earnest men were coming to see that they were not so far apart after all, and that among masses of true Christian people there had been misunderstanding, rather than actual disagreement.

Then a wise leadership in the Church began to make the most of these facts and to move in the direction of peace. And here as the figure of most significance we come upon Athanasius.

With a mastery of the real meaning of the theological situation, he had already written "De Synodis," in which an olive branch was held out to those whose differences from the Nicene party were verbal rather than real. Now he saw that the time had come to take another step. Returned to Alexandria and again occupying his office as bishop, he was a strategic element in the whole situation. And he did exactly the right thing. He held a council to deal with the pressing problems of the Church. It was made up of but twenty-one bishops, but it was far and away more important than councils more pretentious numerically.

One of the things which had to be settled was what to do with men who had been committed to or involved in Arianism and now wanted to resume their place in orthodoxy. Under the wise leadership of Athanasius, it was decided that no humiliating conditions would be required. A profession of the Nicene position so emphasized as to insure the allegiance to a really orthodox position was all that was to be asked. By this measure a great step was taken toward securing the peace of the Church. Disputes had arisen regarding the use of the word *hypostasis*. The real occasion of these disputes was that by some the word was taken to mean *essence*, while by others it was taken to mean *person*. Those who used it with the sense of essence spoke of there being one *hypostasis* in the Godhead. Those who used it in the sense of person, spoke of three *hypostases* in the Godhead. Now clearly all that was needed to reconcile these two parties was that each should understand what the other meant. The council dealt with this situation and lifted the discussion into clarity, so that there need be no more misunderstanding.

Some problems which had been raised regarding the nature of Christ were looked into, with the conclusion that those holding positions which had been



questioned, could not be classed heretical. A practical difficulty arising out of the state of affairs at Antioch was considered, and decisions were reached which would have brought peace there, had not the hasty work of one confessor more enthusiastic than wise, brought new and unconquerable confusion into the situation before the results of the council were brought to the city.

The *Tome*, or synodal letter, written to the people of Antioch by Athanasius, tells of the council and its conclusions. This letter has been very warmly praised, and the spirit of sweet reasonableness it exhibits is an agreeable contrast to much that was harsh and relentless in this stormy age.

The council had been conducted with rare statesmanship and moving along these lines the Church might come to new unity, prestige, and power. But all this was far enough from the desire of Julian. As we have seen the part Christianity was to play in the program he had outlined was that of falling into confusion, as a result of its inherent weakness. He was angered now that the Church refused to play the part. We will not be mistaken in concluding that he came to feel that one of the causes of the new vitality the Church was exhibiting was Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.

After writing that he had never meant Athanasius to take possession of his see, he ordered him to leave Alexandria and Egypt. We can feel the hatred Julian had for the Alexandrian bishop, and also his sense of the power of the bishop, in the biting epithets he used regarding him. He was "the enemy of the gods," "a meddler," "a miscreant," and "a paltry manikin." Emperors did not waste so many vigorous words on weaklings. It took strong men so to arouse them. Julian was particularly incensed against Athanasius because he had dared to baptize Greek ladies during his reign. It was galling enough to have the Christianity which was to have died of its own folly, making inroads on paganism, so when Athanasius had been eight months in Alexandria, he found himself again condemned to exile, with the threat of something worse.

Surrounded by weeping friends, he was strong with words of comfort. "Be of good cheer," he said, "it is but a cloud; it will soon pass."

He embarked in a boat to go up the Nile. Another boat started after in pursuit. With ready strategy, Athanasius took advantage of a turn in the river, and caused his own boat to face about toward Alexandria. A little later the pursuing boat met another descending the river. The pursuers

asked for news of Athanasius. "He is not far off," was the reply. The boat was that of the bishop, and if we are to believe one account, the voice which gave the reply was that of Athanasius himself. He put in at a station near Alexandria, and after the danger of discovery was over, ascended to the upper part of Egypt.

The fourth exile of Athanasius was a brief one. He was a fugitive in personal danger for less than one year. It was probably during this time that he was met at night near Hermopolis by Theodore of Tabenne, with a crowd of monks carrying torches. Looking upon them, Athanasius quoted the words of Isaiah, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their cotes."

Mounted on an ass, led by Theodore, he rode through the throng of monks while the latter chanted psalms. It was a kind of night triumph for the great exile. Looking upon the monks with enthusiasm, he declared, "It is not we that are fathers, it is these men devoted to humility and obedience."

At Tabenne he inspected everything and commended the abbot. When Theodore said, "Remember us in your prayers," Athanasius replied with warmth of feeling, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem."

Later we are told Athanasius was being removed

from Antinoë, that his pursuers might be evaded. In a covered boat, with the wind against him, he was composing himself for the worst, when his companions declared that Julian, the heathen emperor, was killed, and so he was safe.

It was indeed true. A stray arrow from one of his own soldiers, had caused the emperor's death.

Jovian, the successor of Julian, was a Christian by profession, and favorable to the orthodox party. With him on the throne there was a totally new ecclesiastical situation. He treated the Arians who wanted to put forward a certain Lucius in the place of Athanasius, with scant courtesy, and restored the exile to the dignity of his office. Athanasius was graciously received in person by the emperor and had the opportunity to put a great and strategic emphasis on the Nicene position. He spent several months at Antioch, and returned to Alexandria in February of 364 A. D. It was a time when everywhere the orthodox faith was moving forward, and those loyal to it must have felt a practical hopefulness greater than they had possessed for years. In this very month of February, however, Jovian died. He was succeeded by Valentinian I, under whom the cause of Nicæa prospered in the West, but Valentinian placed Valens on the throne in the East,

and in Valens, once more, the Arians found an emperor who looked with sympathy upon them and their cause. For a time the change in government made no difference in the position of Athanasius at Alexandria. And in this period has been placed the publication of his "Life of Antony." This is the story of the life of the great monk Antony, of his renunciation of the world, his struggles, his saintliness, and his power. It has the qualities which later made monasticism abnormal. But it has much Christian feeling withal. Even under the fanciful marvels told of Antony, the Christian intuition usually remains true. The book became very influential. Even Augustine felt its power. "At Rome, and all over the West, it kindled the flame of monastic aspiration." But Antony loved solitude better than service. That was true of monasticism, and ultimately a selfish isolation, and the severity of barbarous self-discipline, the suggestions of which we find even in this work, proved the ruin of a system whose idea at its best was partial and abnormal. In the spring of 365 A. D., Valens began to take measures which involved Athanasius. He ordered that all bishops exiled by Constantius and restored under Julian, should at once be expelled. It was claimed by friends of the bishop that

inasmuch as Constantius had himself restored Athanasius, and Julian had expelled him, he did not come under the description of the edict. There was such a popular feeling against the expulsion of the bishop, that it was expressed by turmoil and riots. The authorities decided to refer the matter directly to the emperor.

On October 5th, Athanasius suddenly disappeared to a place of concealment near the city. It was one of those opportune movements characteristic of him. That very night the Church of Dionysius was broken into and searched throughout by the prefect, and military commandant, who had come to seize Athanasius.

So began his fifth exile. This was the shortest, lasting only four months. At the end of that time he was recalled and publicly escorted by the notary Brasidas and a multitude of people to the Church of Dionysius. After this official restoration on February 1, 366, he was not again disturbed. A man of about seventy, he returned from his last exile with seven years of life before him.

The great Church in the Cæsareum was burned in 366 A. D., in a heathen riot. In the following year, Lucius, the Arian pretender to the see of Alexandria, ventured into the city. His coming was

the signal for such a popular rising that he had to be escorted out of the city by soldiers in order to secure his personal safety.

Two instances of the method of the administration of Athanasius have come down to us from these last years, both of which are to his credit. In one case he accepted a bishop whose ordination had been irregular, because the practical exigencies of the situation seemed to demand it. In the other, he excommunicated the immoral governor of Libya, and made the fact known in all directions.

An interesting feature of this period is his friendship with the rising theologian, Basil. The latter spoke of Athanasius in the very highest terms, and the Alexandrian bishop defended the orthodoxy of Basil when it was questioned. Basil endeavored to secure, through Athanasius, even at this late time, an adjustment of the situation at Antioch. But this did not prove possible.

A council held by Athanasius about 362 A. D. had resulted in his synodal letter "To the Africans," another statement about the great Nicene Creed, and the contrast between it and the Arian formularies. His influence is witnessed to by the fact that at his suggestion the Arian bishop of Milan was excommunicated by a Roman synod.

To the end of his life, Athanasius retained his interest in theological questions. Different letters written in these last days deal with problems which had arisen as to the nature of Christ. And two works are a repudiation of the views of Apollinaris, though he never mentioned his old friend by name. The bishop was watching every theological current, and eager to the last to save the Church from possible peril. He built a church which was dedicated in 370 A. D. and called by his own name.

So in the quiet administration of his diocese, and the execution of literary work dealing with the profoundest problems, the last years were passed. He was feeling the weight of the long, heavy years. In his "festal letter" of 371 A. D., he quotes the words, "For we have here no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come." And in a fragment of the letter written to announce the Easter Festival, in the very year of his death, we read, "And as all the old things were a type of the new, so the festival that now is, is a type of the joy which is above, to which coming with psalms and spiritual songs, let us begin the fasts." His thoughts, always full of the unseen realities, are turning with the gladness of eager anticipation to the other country. The old man, with whitened hair and serenely beautiful face, is full



of love for his own Alexandria, and full of longing for "Jerusalem the Golden."

In the month of May (the second or third day) 373 A. D., the end came. Athanasius specified Peter, one of his presbyters, as his choice for his successor, and then tranquilly passed from life to where "Beyond these voices there is peace." Very full of peace on that May morning must have seemed the chamber where lay the silent form of the great bishop. How often he must have longed with a sad eagerness, in many hard and terrible years, for quiet and repose. But he had not faltered. He had borne his burden, so very hard a burden. He marched breast forward, he had not lost courage, but had fought with unflagging heroism and unfailing devotion. Now it was all over. A saddened, bereft city. A quiet chamber with awed and softly moving attendants. A form in the icy stillness and silence of death. This was the end.

But no, this was not all. A Church where the name of Athanasius was a word to conjure with; a world which had felt the might of his true and devoted life; a future whose battle he had fought beforehand, and whose debt to him it is hard adequately to express; and a theology living and powerful, and vital to meet the very needs of men, the

theology for which he had fought,—this remained behind to live through the Church's whole life.

And what for Athanasius himself? For the hero who had fought for his Lord, and now had come to the end of his time of battle? Of him we may worthily use the words of Paul, "To depart and be with Christ, which is far better." He had gone to meet his Lord.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE THEOLOGY OF ATHANASIUS.

WE live in a time when the importance of theology is often underestimated. There are spacious and attractive ways of seeming to exalt Christ while depreciating theology. It is possible to say that we care much more for Jesus Christ Himself than for men's various theories about Him. It is easy also to seem to exalt Christianity, while turning from Christian doctrine and calling it unessential. Here we may say that Christianity is a life and not a creed, and that to enter into its spirit is much better than merely to accept its formulas. All this sounds very reverent and devout, and a good many people are misled by it. But a little close thinking ought to convince us once for all, that Christ's real power rests at last in *who* He is; so that the questions about His person are a life-and-death matter to Christianity itself.

And with all the noble things we say about the spirit of our religion and the life of love, surely no questions are more important than those which ask

whether this spirit and this life have any justification in the constitution of things. Is there a God who cares for this life of love? Are there ultimate Christian facts, as well as beautiful Christian sentiments? These questions are very vital and very practical.

. Their answer leads us into the realm of theology. And so we find theology to be the very foundation of Christianity. Without this foundation of doctrine, Christianity would vanish away like a warm evening breeze followed by the cold chill of night.

With this conception of the importance of theology, we will approach the survey of the theological positions of Athanasius. We will feel, not that we have come to a desert place in our study of his life, but to a place of peculiar importance and of peculiar interest. Athanasius himself made no pretense of being the formal constructor of a theological system. He was forced into theology by his interest in religion.

In his most speculative mood he is trying to protect things which he believes to be of practical Christian value. He wrote no formal and rounded out system of theology. But it is possible from his various writings to get a pretty clear idea of what was his attitude toward the various doctrines of the

faith, as far as they had been thought out, up to his time, or were thought out by himself. Beginning at the very start, of course, we find Athanasius to be a Monotheist. He believed in one God, and he ascribed to the one God all possible qualities of greatness, might, righteousness, and beneficence. His thinking was rooted in a clear and definite Christian theism. His freedom from the taint of polytheism seems but a commonplace now. But in a time when heathenism was still powerful, and the Church itself was in the temptation of being deeply influenced by its contact, there was a militant quality about a Christian thinker's monotheism which we do not expect to find to-day.

We do not need to draw our swords over what every one takes for granted. The opponent of Christianity in modern thinking is as ready to repudiate polytheism as the Christian thinker himself. On the other hand, there are now foes to be met whom Athanasius did not know. The agnostic and the thinker who legislates God out of the universe in the name of science, did not walk the streets of Alexandria.

There was one feature about the theism of Athanasius which we must stop to emphasize. He not only believed in a God who transcended the uni-

verse—thus being quite free from Pantheism. He also believed in the immanence of God. This is very important. One of the great questions in the history of thought is whether there is a natural barrier between God and the created universe. The root of many a sad failure in thinking has been the belief that in the very nature of things there is a barrier between God and the world. He is so high and remote that He could not even stoop to create the world. It seems a strange way to honor God—by putting Him out of reach of His world. For it practically puts His world out of His reach, thus limiting Him while it seems to honor Him. All sorts of errors flow out of this fundamental one. Intermediaries become necessary for creation. The creation itself may soon come to be looked upon as unworthy. Matter may be regarded as evil. And the very tragedy of life may be declared to be found in nature in the constitution of things, and not in the awful fact of sin.

Athanasius lived in a time when false notions about the remoteness of God were found everywhere. He was not misled but held to the one path of safety. God was the immanent God. He did not live infinitely removed. There was no barrier in nature between God and His world. Creation constantly felt the touch of the divine.

This conception of the immanence of God is very acceptable to modern thought. And this is one of the places where the instinct of present day thinking is correct. It is one of the glories of Greek theology that it was a witness for this truth so long ago.

Creation, according to Athanasius, was through the Logos—the pre-existent Son. But not because the Father *could not* touch the world directly, was this true. It was simply a feature of the Divine plan.

The glory and hope of creation is the touch of the Divine upon it. Man's hope of immortality is through constant relation with the Logos. Man was created a free being—the Greek theology always emphasizes freedom. This freedom man misused. Thus sin entered the world.

There is a barrier between God and man, but it is not a barrier found in the very nature of things. It is an ethical barrier. Sin is the cause of it. And sin is not a foe which slipped upon man unawares. It is the result of his free personal choice. The whole tragedy of life is here. And man is to blame. This emphasis on the personal entrance of sin into the world is of the utmost importance in Christian thinking. To vacate sin of its awfulness, even in

our thinking, is to put a debilitating poisonous error at the very root of our Christian lives.

Now sin has robbed man of his relation to the Logos, out of which his greatest hope would spring, and has put him under the penalty of punishment, according to Athanasius. What is to be done about it? Will God allow His race of men to sink into utter failure and ruin? This He can not do, and hence comes the great plan of deliverance—the incarnation and the redemptive deed.

It is worth our while to emphasize the fact that the incarnation itself has a redemptive significance to Athanasius. It is a feature of the redemptive plan. What is the incarnation? It is the pre-existent Logos—coming into human life. It is God becoming man. This humiliation, this entering into our limitations of the Son of God, is to Athanasius a source of never-ending joy. But great as it is—with human life glorified by it—there is something coming out of it which is its climax. This is the death of the incarnate Son of God. If the incarnation was a feature of the redemptive plan, here in the death of Christ we have the redemptive deed itself.

The greatest thinking of Athanasius was not done about the atonement. He may not have



thought his way far into it. But his whole attitude toward it is typically Christian. And in that attitude there is a profounder meaning than in many a wrought-out theory. Here is a place where we need the distinction between the fact and the theory.

Athanasius, like multitudes of the early Christians, felt the glory of Christ's redemptive death. But he doubtless could not have given a theory of it which would be very satisfying. He is not without stimulating thought here, however. His intense feeling of the way in which Christ became one with the race, will surely be a part in the ultimate explanation of the philosophy of the work of our Lord.

Athanasius believed that through the incarnation comes the supreme revelation of God. But he recognized the Old Testament preparation for this, and our dependence on the New Testament writings. The Scriptures he considered an authority. It is noteworthy that in their interpretation he insisted upon a study of the context. We have seen already that he used methods of exegesis which sometimes led him far astray. The allegorical method of interpretation of the Bible is a method which would ultimately vacate it of all meaning. Athanasius was not free from this. But he had a sane sense of what the great message of the Bible was, and so his

leading teachings were sound, and even when he read a truth into passages which were never meant to teach that particular truth, he did no great harm. But the trouble is that if Athanasius be allowed to read a true thing into some passages not meant to teach that true thing, other men will read falsehood into the words of Scripture. And at last there will be danger of Bible study becoming the ingenuous injection of our own ideas into the Word of God. The only satisfactory and permanently helpful method of studying the Bible is by an endeavor to discover what the writers meant. The vagaries of fanciful exegesis are a disgrace to the faith.

Later times were to give new implements and sounder principles of Biblical study than Athanasius knew. The historical method was to set men free from the folly of seeking endless allegory. The apprehension of God's method of revealing Himself to men by giving them at every period the truth they could then understand and appropriate and gradually leading them to the great goal of a full revelation, delivered men from the burdensome necessity of trying to find the complete Gospel in every Old Testament book. The Bible is seen in its true vitality and wonder, as it was not in the days of the fathers, through the splendid results of modern

scholarship. In these things we can not look to Athanasius as a guide.

But some things in the attitude of Athanasius toward the Scriptures, we must never lose. He was sure that God had revealed Himself. He was sure that the Scriptures contained an account of that revelation on which men could depend. He was sure that God had wrought a great salvation. And he was sure that the Scriptures brought to men God's own message about that salvation. In the Scriptures God's voice became articulate. They gave an authoritative and redemptive message to the world. Methods of interpretation may change and improve, but certain things in all really Christian study of the Bible remain unchanged. One of these is the unwavering belief that here we have not only wonderful human voices, but here we have God's own voice and His own message adequately given to the world.

It is most interesting that in one of the letters of Athanasius we have a statement of the canon of Scripture as he accepted it. The New Testament contains the same books we find in our New Testaments to-day.

Speaking of the Canonical Books, Athanasius

says: "These are fountains of salvation. In them alone is proclaimed the doctrine of Godliness."

He refers to writings outside the canon which may be read by beginners for instruction and to other works which are entirely false.

Athanasius had no hard-and-fast sense of the authority of the Church. He believed in the Church. He cared for its unity. He revered its traditions. But we do not find in him the Churchly idea worked out in the fashion of later times.

It is a great thing to have a Church. But it is a sad thing to have a Church whose very strength is gained at the expense of true religion.

That thing happened to Christianity in the Middle Ages, and there were not lacking evidences pointing toward that consummation in the time of Athanasius. But to him the Church was not an end in itself. He was not a Churchman first and a Christian afterwards. And his conception of the Church was not that of a worldly ecclesiastical prince.

It has already been made very evident in these pages that the most vital place in the thinking of Athanasius related to the Deity of our Lord. It was the mission of his life to witness to the fact that Jesus Christ was not a creature. In vain might

men pile up adjectives and glorify Christ as the most unique and splendid of all the creatures in the whole universe. This could never satisfy Athanasius. To him Jesus Christ was God. Anything less than this acknowledgment meant the striking at the very root of Christianity. Athanasius believed that you lost Christianity if you lost its Divine Lord. With every variety of skillful argument he pressed this fact home. It was his "all" he was fighting for. The brightness of life, the very last hope on which he rested would have disappeared if he had felt compelled to come to the Arian position. This is the important thing for us to understand. We need not try to remember all the subtle distinctions made in the course of the theological controversy which lasted through so many years. We will have mastered the heart of the whole matter if we understand that Athanasius contended for a genuine incarnation with Jesus Christ in the completest and most thorough-going sense Divine.

This leads us to a very interesting question. What was his conception of the Trinity? If he believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as he did, how did he succeed in protecting his

monotheism? How did he keep from affirming three gods instead of one?

The doctrine of the Trinity has been, perhaps, the most puzzling of any in the whole range of Christian thinking for theologians of every age. Able Christian thinkers have again and again come to this doctrine and treated it with a haziness which has left their readers with a sense of intellectual helplessness. Men have felt that this doctrine pressed too heavily on their reason, and have turned from it in despair.

Others have added to the confusion by theories whose internal contradictions were only too evident to those who were seeking light on the problem. Still others have frankly confessed the situation too difficult to handle, and have taken refuge in a devout agnosticism which has said, "We believe but we can not explain." Perhaps the prevailing attitude of the Church to-day—as far as sturdy orthodoxy goes—is to state the two sides of the doctrine (there are three persons, there is one God) and to make no endeavor to go beneath the statement.

The Church can not rest in such a blank and empty attitude as this, however. Men's minds will return to the problem. The ablest—and to the present writer—the only satisfactory dealing with

the doctrine is that which sees in the Trinity three actual persons—just as we are persons—bound together in one organic Godhead, in the unity of an eternal life in which each is necessary for the very existence of the others; the Father, the source and unifying principle in it all, and with this an absolutely perfect ethical harmony forever. This view gives one organic Godlife and three actual persons, and so sets the mind at rest.<sup>1</sup>

It has been introduced here because of a very interesting question, Did Athanasius succeed in keeping three actual persons—in the actual ordinary meaning of that word—back in the Godhead? One would like to believe that he did. Undoubtedly such a view is the natural inference from opinions which he held. Did he make the inference? And it has been ably argued that he did hold such a view. The present writer, while open to conviction, at present does not feel certain that he did. It is a difficult question, and it would not be strange if this early Greek father did not think his way through it. Many of the things Athanasius says are at least open to the interpretation that when he came back to the inner life of the Godhead, he, like other the-

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Professor Olin A. Curtis, *The Christian Faith*, section on *The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity*.

ologians, found a mystery he could not penetrate, and simply tried to speak in such a way as to protect truths he held dear.

We need not pursue the theological teachings of Athanasius in further detail. What was vital and of lasting significance has been already indicated. We have previously referred to his attitude toward asceticism and need not enlarge upon that here.

He lived in an age when one great doctrine was being fought out to a conclusion. And in that battle no man fought more bravely or more effectively—and none fought with such grasp of the real meaning of the issue as he. As a theologian Athanasius lives as the great defender of the doctrine of the Deity of our Lord.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MESSAGE OF ATHANASIUS TO OUR TIME.

OVER fifteen hundred years have passed since Athanasius lived. That is a very long time. How much can happen in a single century, not to speak of fifteen of them! Life has greatly changed in these long centuries and we look out on a far different world from that of the great bishop of Alexandria. It would be easy to think that a life from so remote a time had nothing to say to the world of to-day. But such a conclusion would be all wrong. Some lives are so vital that they speak a message to every age, and such a life was that of Athanasius.

In this concluding chapter we want to take a look at our modern life, and see what Athanasius has to say to it.

The world to-day with its infinitely varied machinery, the swift flight of its locomotives speeding across continents, the gleam of the electric lights making night like day in the great cities, seems dif-

ferent enough from the world of the fourth century. The stern might of the Roman Empire is only a memory lying half moss-covered in the distant past. New continents have risen from the long silence of their seclusion and have become partakers in the world's life. Through the throbbing nerves of telegraph and cable men may flash messages across the world, almost abolishing space. The great ocean liner of to-day makes the mightiest ship of earlier centuries shrink into insignificance.

Accompanying these external changes there have been vast changes in human thought. Here one word stands for an intellectual revolution. That word is *science*. To-day we have a sense of "the reign of law" quite unknown to the past. We see as men did not see before, that the universe is an ordered whole. Before this new knowledge of law, this new sense of the stability of the universe, of the constant relation between cause and effect, many superstitious beliefs have withered and died. One of the great services of modern science has been the way in which it has cleared the life of thoughtful men of hoary superstition. But underneath all the changes, human life has the same essential meaning which it has always had. The form of life has been transformed rather than its essence. The heart

throbs of hungry lives beat out the same longing through the centuries.

The profound needs of humanity remain unchanged, and so a great human life speaks in a voice to be understood by every age.

It is here first of all that Athanasius speaks to us. His was a life of victorious manhood. The root of everything else in his life lies in the fact that he was an earnest man. Often the world passes this quality of earnestness by. It seems so humble and unpretentious. Men seek brilliant and striking qualities, and after wasted years wake to the fact that none of them are so mighty as the one they had passed by. Often earnestness does not seem to sparkle and glitter much, but it carries in its heart a fire which will at last burst out in bright and lasting luminousness. And Athanasius was earnest. He was unfalteringly true.

How shabby beside these qualities of his do the showy falsenesses of clever men of his time now seem. He made the right choice when he decided at any cost to be true.

We live in a time when the qualities which glitter are held at high value. Cleverness might almost be called the god some men worship. But do we appreciate the great foundation qualities of ear-

nestness and trueness? Do we understand that without this foundation any structure we build, however pretentious, must ultimately fall? It is like breathing fresh life-giving air to get into the atmosphere of lives like those of Athanasius. In the midst of daring and brilliant falseness he found his way safely, because he chose to live the life of a true man full of earnest seeking after the best. His loyalty to that decision helped to carve the gigantic stature of his manhood.

Another fine thing about Athanasius was his simplicity. Looking rapidly over his career with its ceaseless activities and all its vicissitudes, one would hardly think of him as an example of "the simple life." But we must not be hasty in deciding. Down under the activity, and the hurry of events, there was a quiet calm, and a clear-eyed single-mindedness which are the very essence of simplicity. We often confuse the issues of life by living in a complex haze of emotions and thoughts never clarified by simple and direct thinking. The way out of this maze of bewildering complexity was found by Athanasius. The secret of his simplicity was an honest devotion to the best and single-hearted loyalty to it.

A foggy nature may be full of interest and surprises. A simple and direct life is the only really

satisfactory one. But this simplicity is by no means inconsistent with versatility. Athanasius was a man who touched life at many angles. The simplicity was in motive and inner bearing rather than in experience. The cosmopolitan has a place among us. It is right that we should have an eager interest in all that pertains to life. But down under this broad outlook and interest we need the fine simplicity which was one of the outstanding characteristics of the Alexandrian bishop.

Going still deeper we find the great religious message of Athanasius's life. He was a man of God. He knew the glory and the wonder of the hidden communion.

It is a good thing to be a man of men. It is worth our while to keep in close and sympathetic touch with the varied currents of human life. But to use even the knowledge which comes from close human contact, in the most effective and helpful way, we must have something more. We must have stood in awed and reverent joy before the burning bush. A voice ringing with a present sense of the Eternal will always find a hearing. Men are hungry for the Unseen. They were born to companion with the Eternal, and their hearts cry out for the Father whom they do not know. When a man hears the

message of Christianity and throws the doors of his life wide open to its work, so that it becomes the possessing reality which dominates his thinking, his feeling, and his action, he becomes a Christian in a sense of unique meaning, whose influence is sure to tell on the lives of other men. This kind of a definition of Christianity the life of Athanasius gives us. When we look for the secret of his unfailing courage through the weary years we find it here. This man knew God, and in Him was strong. And the summons his life brings to us as Christians is that we, too, should open our lives to God, should venture out upon Him in the daring of trust, and so find that the unsearchable riches of the Gospel are still for those who go to possess them. It is still possible for men to walk through life always clasping the unseen Hand.

In regard to the life of the Church Athanasius has something very important to teach us. One of the most subtle and one of the most dangerous foes of the Church is ecclesiasticism. It is possible in any denomination to be a Churchman rather than a Christian. It is possible to place the even and placid administration of the Church's affairs above loyalty to principle. It is possible to consider the peace of the Church more important than its faithfulness. It

is possible to seek the external prosperity and power of the Church at the expense of its purity and its adherence to the high standards which it is its mission to uphold. The foe of the Church is the temporizer with the world. All this is made more dangerous because the spirit of compromise is likely to clothe itself in the garments of devotion and piety. We have seen how Athanasius chose to endure any suffering rather than to be false to his Master, how he was willing to see the Church plunged into the most awful turmoil rather than that it should become false. And now we know that he served the best interests of the Church itself. Prosperity and power bought at the expense of principle, put a palsying blight at the heart of the Church. Storm and stress for the sake of loyalty to its own high standards, make its fields fertile and are full of the promise of fruitage in the days to come. One of the last acts of Athanasius of which we know, was his proceeding against a governor of immoral life, and his whole spirit was of heroic and dauntless faithfulness, whatever the cost. When Churchly statesmanship becomes unworthy compromise for the sake of temporary external prosperity, the Church is in imminent danger of decay. Men will

be less likely to fall into this snare if they have learned the lesson of the life of Athanasius.

We live in a peculiar time as regards theology. Men pride themselves on being undogmatic. A really earnest attempt is being made to keep the spirit while discarding the philosophy of Christianity. All the appreciation of the practical teachings of the Gospel is to be heartily approved. We feel a kinship with every man who desires his life to be kindled into a glow and warmth like that coming from the unselfish love of Christ. But the attempt to keep the Christian life, while discarding or ignoring the whole metaphysical background of Christianity, is doomed to failure. In a period of theological transition men may find temporary relief in such an endeavor. But to keep Christian living you must have Christian thinking, too. Athanasius saw with the most complete insight that it does make a difference what men believe. His lifelong endeavor was to keep the Church committed to correct theological thinking. He knew that without this nothing was safe.

The suggestion which comes to us at this point is obvious. If correct Christian thinking was important in the fourth century, it is important in the twentieth. The Church needs to be roused to a new



interest in doctrine. There must be a revival of strong and virile doctrinal preaching.

There is a right and there is a wrong way of preaching doctrine. When the preacher mechanically utters cold and lifeless formulas no one is moved, and small wonder. Like Athanasius, the preacher must feel that it is the very life of Christianity which its cardinal doctrines contain. He must open his life to them. And he must give them forth with all the eagerness of his own enthusiasm for the faith and all the warmth which the great truths they express should inspire. Get the conviction of a living man pulsing in a great doctrine and there will be no cold, lifeless formality about the sermon.

The invasion of the sects with all their vagaries, the limp and feeble grasp of Christianity by members of the Church,—these may be dealt with if only men come to have a vision of Christianity, a vision in which every doctrine shines with the brightness of its full meaning. The way to deal with a flabby, undogmatic age, is to give it living and articulated doctrine. Get a man to see Christianity and many of the catchwords of the more superficial thought of our time become unattractive and without power to stir him.

The undogmatic mood regarding Christianity, of which we have been speaking, comes to a climax in regard to the person of Christ. There was never a time in which men were more inclined to pay compliments to Jesus than to-day. And there was never a time when the world at large more thoroughly felt the winsomeness and the purity of His life. Many men who would not stop with a mere diletante tribute to the Master, are really won by His life. They sincerely want to make His way of living their way. They want to be like Christ. But many of these men feel insuperable difficulties in the way of accepting the Church's doctrine of His person. This we are told they can not honestly do.

What is to be done for these men? A wonderful way of escape from difficulty has been provided for them. It has been stated in many forms, but the idea itself is inseparably connected with the name of the distinguished and influential German theologian, Albrecht Ritschl. The way in which Professor Ritschl meets the difficulty is this: Jesus Christ, he tells us, has the value of God to us. He does for us God's work, and therefore in our religious lives we may worship Him, and accept His message. Beyond this we need not go. We need ask no metaphysical questions about His person.

We need not inquire if He really is the incarnation of the pre-existent, eternal Son of God. In fact, all such metaphysical considerations have no place in theology. The bane of theology is to attempt to confuse religion by introducing that which really has no connection with it. Let us be content with the fact that Jesus Christ brings us God's message, reveals God to us, leads us into a victorious life, has the value of God to us, and ask no further questions.

This attitude toward the person of Christ is peculiarly attractive to the temper of our time. And many men have accepted it. But can we not see that it is only a half-way house on the road to a higher or to a lower conception of Christ? If Jesus Christ is all that Professor Ritschl acknowledges, He must be more. He must be actually God. He must be metaphysically divine. And if He is not more, if He is not really God incarnate, men can not permanently go on believing Him to be all that Professor Ritschl acknowledges. He must be more or He can not be as much. For the Ritschlian position regarding the person of Christ, as a half-way house where earnest men stop on the way to the full Christian conception of our Lord's Deity, we may have respect, but to assert that it represents the ultimate Christian position is to assert an intel-

lectual impossibility. From such a position the Church will either go up to the adequate Christian view, or down into sheer humanitarianism.

When we turn in this modern Christological situation to Athanasius, we find that he has a most vital message to give us. Any man who has learned all that Athanasius has to teach him, will see the impossibility of this modern theological compromise. The very central thing which Athanasius said to his own age, he says to ours. "Nothing less than God incarnate can meet the needs of sinful men. We dare not depend on the most exalted creature for salvation." And we dare not depend on a noble historical mystery about whom we can not ask any definite questions. If Christianity is to continue robust and vital, the whole subject of Christology must be lifted out of the nebulous haziness which has characterized much modern thinking. It does make a difference *who* Christ was. We are not irreverent to ask the most probing questions about His person. We have to ask them. The very urgency of our need drives us on. If there is no answer, if we are confronted simply by a pious agnosticism about Christ, if nobody can be *sure* that He is anything more than a creature, our religion is vacated of its deepest meaning, and we are left empty and miserable.

But we do not need to stop at the half-way house. It is possible to know. The theology of reverent ignorance about the person of Christ is a theology which has never adequately studied the New Testament, has never really understood the history of the Church, has never sounded the depths of Christian consciousness, and has never understood the deep needs of men.

The unanimous verdict of all these brings us to rest securely in the belief that Jesus Christ was in the most complete and fullest meaning of the word divine—"Very God"—the eternal Father's eternal Son. Towering above the Church in all its history, is this one colossal figure. With all His tender sympathy, with all His winsome humanity, with all the humiliation of His life and death on earth, He is still God. And our hope, the very glory of our faith, is in this, that the eternally pre-existent, Son of God, who was equal with God, emptied Himself, entered upon a career of humiliation, and for us men and our salvation became a man; that the strong Son of God suffered death for us and so wrought our redemption. With this unflinching faith, and with a personal trust in this Almighty Savior, we can face the universe unafraid.

For Christianity, so defined, Athanasius fought.

And we inherit the fruits of his battle, and of his victory. May we be clear-eyed to see the real meaning of Christianity in our day, as he saw it in his. May we be absolutely loyal to our faith in the Son of God. May we accept no compromise, be beguiled by no subtle sophistry which while praising Christ would dethrone Him.

The Apostle Paul when an old man uttered some great words. They were these: "I have kept the faith." The great message of Athanasius to us is this: "Keep the faith."

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